A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention

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DECLARATION

I, Bongiwe Nolisonto Mkwanazi declare that this dissertation, A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF TEACHERS TO PROVIDE INTERIM SUPPORT TO LEARNERS AWAITING DISTRICT-BASED SUPPORT TEAM INTERVENTION, submitted to obtain the MEd degree at the North-West University, is the result of research I have done. I further declare that this research has never been submitted by me at any other faculty nor university.

B.N MKWANAZI

DEDICATION

To Mzwakhe Mkwanazi, my soulmate, my supporter and pillar of strength. I would not have made it this far without your motivation, care, and support, babes. Thank you for believing in me and always willing to listen when I use you as a sounding board. Thank you, in particular, for elevating my spirits when I was discouraged. I give thanks to God for bringing us together.

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Last but not least, thanks to my father, Ndaleni Malindi: you have always believed in me and were never shy to celebrate my achievements no matter how small. I know that I have made you proud. I’ll always love you Baba.

ABSTRACT

Proponents of inclusive education (IE) advocate that given adequate support, most children and youth can learn. The goal of IE is to ensure that all learners, including those experiencing barriers to learning, have access to quality education alongside their peers in ordinary classrooms. The strengthening of Education Support Services through the District-Based Support Teams (DBST) and the School-Based Support Teams (SBST) were supposed to help attain this goal. However, these services cannot always respond within a suitable period; the aim of this study was therefore to capacitate teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention, as research indicates that most teachers are not attending to this. The primary research question is: How can the capacity of teachers be developed to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention? An emancipatory paradigm guided the study to help participants realise their potential for action. A participatory action research (PAR) design was used to enable teachers and support structure representatives to find ways to collaborate and empower each other to support learners awaiting specialist intervention. Participants were recruited by means of purposive sampling technique and consisted of six qualified educators working full-time at a school in the Sedibeng West District of Gauteng Province and have experience with referring a learner for SBST intervention. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Preliminary findings indicate that without adequate teacher training, support, personal professional development, and collaboration among teachers, interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention will remain challenging. The study will hopefully contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of inclusive education. We generated guidelines about establishing collaborative strategies to develop the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention. The limitations of this study Therefore, the study findings could be difficult to transfer to other schools since it was conducted in only one of the twelve full-service schools in Sedibeng West District. Teachers in other FSS of the same district may/may not experience the same waiting period as teachers in the research site.

Key terms: District-Based Support Team, Education Support Services, Inclusive Education, Learner Support, School-Based Support Team, Teacher Support

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ABREVIATIONS

ASD:	Autism spectrum disorder
CPDT:	Continuing Professional Development for Teachers
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
DBST:	District-Based Support Team
DHET:	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE:	Department of Education
ECT(s):	Early career teacher(s)
EFA:	Education for All
ESS:	Education Support Services
EWP6:	Education White Paper 6
ISP:	Individual Support Plan
ITE:	Initial Teacher Education
NCESS:	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET:	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
NPFTED:	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development
PAR:	Participatory Action Research
PCK:	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PD:	Professional Development
SBST:	School-Based Support Team
SGB:	School Governing Body
SIAS:	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

SPFTED : Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development

TAT: Teachers Assistance Team

UNESCO: United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER 1 : OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This participatory action research (PAR) study aims to facilitate the development of collaborative strategies that will enable teachers to provide interim support to learners referred to the District-Based Support Team (DBST) for specialised intervention. In this chapter I provide the background to the study, followed by the problem statement, the research questions, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, a discussion on the methodology, the quality criteria, ethical measures and division of chapters. To conclude, I outline the time frame.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In 1990, in Thailand, representatives from 155 nations and 160 governmental and non-governmental organisations gathered for a world conference on Education for All (Peters, 2007). At that gathering, the conference reaffirmed that education is an essential human right. The conference also focused on including millions of children old enough to go to school, but without access to formal education - and those vulnerable to exclusion (UNESCO, 1990). All governments represented committed to ensuring quality primary education for children, youth and adults (UNESCO, 1990). Subsequently, in 1994, a conference on Special Needs Education was held as a follow-up in Salamanca, Spain. The following was concluded at the conference:

- Every child is different and has the fundamental right to education.
- Education must meet the different needs and characteristics of children.
- Ordinary schools must be accessible to learners with special educational requirements.
- All children must learn simultaneously.
- Children's differences and developmental challenges must be supported by providing tailored plans (UNESCO, 1994, p.11-12).

As a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and in accordance with international developments, South Africa promulgated an inclusive education and training system in 2001 through the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (EWP6). The inclusive education and training system described in EWP6 envisages a society that accommodates all learners, no matter how different their learning capabilities are. It recognises and supports the differences among all learners and their varied learning needs by including them within the education and training system (DoE, 2001; Engelbrecht, et al., 2015; Swart & Pettipher, 2019).

Appropriately implemented, inclusive education enables all learners to benefit academically and socially, and as people of a free country, they are prepared for active participation in society (DBE, 2011; Mitchell, 2010). Proper implementation seems central for the success of inclusive education, as detailed in the EWP6 (Mahlo, 2011; Mnguni, 2017). The National Department of Education also recognises that the success of inclusive education rests on a strengthened Education Support Services system (DoE, 2001, 2005). A strengthened Education Support Services (ESS) consist of different structures meant to support and capacitate both teachers and learners (Nel et al., 2016), with the DBSTs and the School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) at its centre (DoE, 2001). The support provided by the ESS focuses mainly on institutional strategies to overcome barriers to learning and promotes academic excellence (DoE, 2001). Such strategies may not necessarily be educational but seek to enhance education and learning in the education system (Mashau et al., 2008). The role of the DBST within the ESS is to:

- Develop ongoing support for SBSTs and other educational institutions to improve their functionality (DoE, 2008; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016).

- Identify and address barriers to learning and encourage effective teaching and learning (DoE, 2001, 2005; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016) so that all learners are provided with the support they need to optimise their learning.

As a starting point for the provision of support to the teachers and the learners, an assessment of support required during any academic period must be established (DoE, 2008; DBE, 2014). To ensure that appropriate and adequate support is given to all learners, including those experiencing or at risk of experiencing barriers to learning, a policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) was introduced in 2008, and a revised document was published in 2014. Barriers to learning refer to any factor(s) that may cause a breakdown in learning (Nel et al., 2016). According to the DBE (2014), barriers to learning are obstacles that hinder access to learning and development; these can occur within the broader education system or wider (extrinsic), or the learner (intrinsic). Extrinsic barriers are those factors that exist beyond the learner but influence the learner's experience (Walton et al., 2009). Often the system cannot accommodate the diverse needs of learners that then precedes a breakdown in learning (DoE, 2001). Intrinsic barriers are obstacles within the learner, including physical and cognitive impairments, emotional disorders and different intellectual capacities (Walton et al., 2009).

The goal of the SIAS policy, regarding uncovering and addressing barriers to learning, is to provide guidelines and structure to standardise processes for screening, assessing and supporting all learners. It was and is also to direct and include ESS at provincial, district and institutional levels (DBE, 2014; Loreman et al., 2007; Nel et al., 2016). The policy specifies that a teacher must screen every learner at admission and at the beginning of each phase. The teacher

will facilitate the support process when the learner has been identified as vulnerable or at risk (DBE, 2014). If the support given by the teacher does not yield positive results, he/she will involve the SBST by making an appointment and presenting the needs of the learner/teacher to the team for discussion. The SBST then fills in a form prescribed in the SIAS (SNA 2) in consultation with the teacher. According to the DBE (2014), the SNA 2 will guide the SBST on the following when a learner is referred to them:

- An analysis of the obstacle(s) described by the referring teacher, with the interventions applied in class.
- An action plan is then formulated with the teacher/school that will refine the support.
- The individual support plan is now developed and executed. This must have a review date to address progress. If necessary, the plan will be modified on the review date, and the SBST can request a higher level of support, in which case the DBST is asked to assist.

The referral of a learner to the DBST implies that the SBST and the teacher could not support the learner adequately, given the available resources at school level (DBE, 2014; Motitswe, 2014). When the learner is referred to the DBST, and the DBST intervention is awaited, the referred learner remains in the classroom with the teacher, seemingly without direct intervention for the referred problem. Yet, the teacher during this period is expected to maximise the learners' engagement in all educational programmes (DBE, 2014) by ensuring that all learners are engaged in teaching and that every learner is taking responsibility for his/her learning (Engelbrecht et al., 2013).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Regarding implementing inclusive education, teachers are key role players (De Boer et al., 2011; DoE, 2001; Mnguni, 2017; Sharma & Sokal, 2015). Agosto (2019) and Ahmmed et al. (2012) further affirm that teachers are important to the success of inclusive education. However, some challenges prevent policy ideals from being realised in practice (Engelbrecht & Ekins, cited in Engelbrecht & Green, 2018). One challenge is that support structures supporting teachers are often ineffective (Nel et al., 2016). Another challenge is that the EWP6 lacks specific details on implementing aspects (of this policy) in practice (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Jacobs, 2015). Due to this lack of specificity and detail in the policy, different perceptions exist about how inclusive education should be implemented (Maluleke, 2015; Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007; Zungu, 2014). This leaves teachers feeling inadequately skilled to effectively implement inclusive education, and some think they do not have adequate resources and support to address the difficulties learners face with learning obstacles in their classrooms (Mkhuma, 2012; Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). Ahmmed et al. (2012) argue that for the ideals of the policy to

be realised in practice, stakeholders should ensure that teachers are supported sufficiently to teach learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Based on the above argument that the EWP6 (DoE, 2001) does not adequately provide implementation strategies for learner support, I aim through this study to develop teachers' capacity to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question for this study is ~~thus~~:

How can the capacity of teachers be developed to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?

This study will be guided by the following sub-questions:

- What are the experiences of teachers awaiting learner support from the DBST?
- What strategies do teachers currently utilise to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?
- What strategies could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?
- What guidelines can be developed from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention?

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.5.1 Inclusive education

Inclusive education seeks to integrate all learners through physical access, inclusion and involvement in traditional classrooms, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, gender, language, disability, etc. (Balami, 2015; DoE, 2001; Engelbrecht et al., 2017; Mittler, 2012). Inclusive education aims to provide education for children with diverse learning needs, especially those who are vulnerable to exclusion and ensure that they are active members of the school community and help build a supportive and inclusive community (Balami, 2015; DoE, 2001).

1.5.2 Learner support

Learner support includes the teacher's varied activities to cater for learners' diverse learning needs and diagnose learners' difficulties. (DoE, 2005; DBE, 2014). It is about helping learners comprehensively understand a subject, assessing various ideas or methods, and recognising the

limitations of knowledge. Above all, it is about encouraging learners to optimise their learning ability or train them to achieve a deeper understanding or a higher level of competence in areas they have struggled with (Bates, 2014). Learner support means stimulating active learning in every learner (Jacobs et al., 2011) such that learners' participation in educational programmes is maximised (DoE, 2001).

1.5.3 Teacher support

For successfully implementing inclusive education policies, and given that implementation eventually occurs in the classroom, there should be support to teachers and learners (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; UNESCO, 1994). Teacher support entails mentoring, coaching, professional development and feedback or reflection. South African teachers' need for support became apparent in the 1997 Curriculum 2005 reform of the curriculum. South Africa has since been flooded with reform after reform, with one new education policy after another. The DBE has conducted four curriculum changes during the 15 years between 1997 and 2012. The 2005 Curriculum (C2005) was adopted in 1997; in 2002, the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) followed; in 2011, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), and more recently, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)(King-McKenzie et al., 2013). Learner support to help teachers in South Africa has mainly been implemented through ESS (DoE, 2001).

1.5.4 Education Support Services

ESS have a role in promoting the efficient and sustainable adoption of an equitable education system. The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education asserts that education support structures that impact inclusive education are diverse and involve various service professionals coordinated within various sectors (Watkins, 2009). As the district, provincial and national educational levels cannot reach all schools, a national mandate is that all schools need to establish local support structures within the school system. The DoE (and now DBE) would rely on these structures to deliver quality education in all schools. In line with this, it is believed that the key to reducing barriers to learning and supporting teachers within all education and training institutions lies in a strengthened ESS - with the DBSTs and SBSTs at its core (DoE, 2001).

1.5.5 District-Based Support Teams

District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs) manage inclusive education and support in each district of all the provinces (Landsberg & Matthews, 2019), as proposed by EWP6. These teams aim to reduce barriers to learning within all education and training sections/departments by supporting education institutions (DoE, 2001) to identify and resolve learning barriers and facilitate effective

teaching and learning (DoE, 2005). The support process encompasses classroom and organisational support, professional support for learners and educators, curriculum and institutional growth, and administrative support (Searle, 2015).

1.5.6 School-Based Support Teams (SBST)

SBSTs proposed by EWP6 are to implement adequately coordinated educator and learner support services. These services should support learning and teaching progression by identifying and addressing the needs of the learner, educator and institution. These teams should be strengthened by expertise from the local community, DBSTs and higher education institutions (Makhalemele, 2011). The key responsibility of the SBSTs is liaising with the district management staff and other related providers of service (such as health professionals, community-based support organisations and other governmental departments) to identify and meet the needs of their specific institutions (Landsberg & Matthews, 2019). The SBSTs emphasise encouraging teachers to develop preventive and promotional strategies within the "health-promoting school framework" (Makhalemele, 2011).

The theoretical framework of the study now follows after explaining the key concepts.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory provides insight and understanding about the actions of individuals and shows how reality unfolds or how it may be changed to be more effective (Creswell, 2009). A theory is a logically connected system of ideas, assumptions and concepts. In some instances, it establishes a relationship between two or more variables to tell us about the world, ourselves or an aspect of reality (Abend, 2008; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Therefore, a theoretical framework guides a dissertation's philosophy, epistemology, methodology, and analytical approach (Osanloo & Grant, 2016). In this dissertation, I utilised Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory and Seligman's positive psychology theory as theoretical bases for the study. Positive psychology focuses on the strengths of humans, whereas the bio-ecological model refers to the many levels of social contexts that influence a person's life to explain human development (Payne-van Staden, 2015).

1.6.1 Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory

The bio-ecological model will illuminate the complexity of the influences, interactions and interrelationships between the learner and other role players involved in learner support, such as the teacher, parents, the SBST, the DBST and the Department of Education (Donald et al., 2020; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Bronfenbrenner identifies five structures or environmental systems in which human beings develop, namely micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems. In the next section, I demonstrate the relevance of this chosen theoretical framework to this study.

1.6.1.1 Micro-system

The micro-system is the immediate environment and involves a pattern of roles, activities and interpersonal relations experienced among individuals and the systems closest to a person's life (Engelbrecht et al., 2017; Swart & Pettipher, 2019), for example, between a learner and the teacher. Relationships and patterns in the micro-system shape many aspects of cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual development (Donald et al., 2020) and will be the research focus of this study.

1.6.1.2 Meso-system

The meso-system is a set of micro-systems that continuously interact (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Donald et al., 2020; Engelbrecht et al., 2013). With this study, the teacher's collaboration with other role players will influence how they support learners awaiting DBST intervention in the interim.

1.6.1.3 Exo-system

The exo-system comprises interactions between two or more settings in which the learner is not involved but is affected by what happens in the settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). The referred learner in this study will be affected by the DBST's intervention, so the teacher may not know what kind of support he/she must provide to the learner to keep the learner actively participating in learning activities. Though the learner is not particularly and directly knowledgeable about the process and may not know of the DBST, her/his learning will be influenced by their processes.

1.6.1.4 Macro-system

The macro-system involves dominant social, cultural and economic structures and beliefs, values and practices of a particular society that influence all systems (Engelbrecht et al., 2013; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). The macro-system is not context-based; the outer structure informs the micro-, meso- and exo-structures (Nel et al., 2016). In the South African context, the macro-system refers to the level at which policy decisions about education are made; that is, the previous National Department of Education (DoE), Department of Basic Education (DBE) and curriculum reform. These policies influence, on a wider level, how teachers should teach and support learners.

1.6.1.5 Chrono-system

The chrono-system is characterised as change or consistency over time in the characteristics of the individual and the environment in which the individual is entrenched (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Hong et al., 2010). The chrono-system is described by Swart and Pettipher (2019) and Rosa and Tudge (2013) as having three levels: micro-, meso-, and macro-time.

Micro-time refers to continuity against discontinuity in constant occurrences of proximal processes, meso-time concerns how often these episodes occur over days and weeks, and macro-time focuses on shifting societal expectations and occurrences, both within and beyond generations (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In this study, the chrono-system is a critical issue, as the waiting period between the referral of a learner by the SBST until DBST intervention finally materialises as the primary focus area. This time can either be optimally utilised to support teaching and learning or may be wasted when a referring teacher feels she has played her part in referring the learner.

1.6.2 Seligman's positive psychology

The Akumal manifesto, authored in Akumal, Mexico in 1999, defines positive psychology as a scientific study of optimum human functioning that aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to flourish (Du Plessis, 2014; Gable & Haidt, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It is a science of the positive aspects of human life, such as well-being, happiness and thriving (Kim et al., 2012). Positive psychology entails studying subjective experiences, positive individual qualities and institutions that enable positive skills and traits of individuals (Dunn, 2017; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Positive psychology will help me in this study to guide teachers to focus on their teaching strengths as well as learners' strengths when the learner awaits DBST intervention. This theory will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, I outline the research paradigm, design and methods. Methodology, in broad terms, refers to the research paradigm, design, methods, approaches and procedures used by the researcher to bring the unknown to the known to investigate a phenomenon (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

1.7.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm, as the lens through which a researcher looks at the world, is the researcher's "worldview" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Krauss, 2005). Worldview is the perspective, thinking, school of thought, and shared beliefs that inform the meaning or interpretation of research data. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), a paradigm outlines how the meaning will be constructed from data collected based on individual experiences (Lincoln et al., 2011). A paradigm helps the researcher organise his/her observations, shaping how the researcher gathers information about what is being studied (Genniker, 2015). I adopted the emancipatory paradigm for this study because the purpose was to work in a participatory way to enable teachers to improve their practices in meaningful ways. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is emancipatory, critical and participatory (Ojageer, 2019; Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008).

1.7.2 Research approach

As the researcher and co-researchers in this study, we will align ourselves with the qualitative research approach based on PAR. The research approach is the scheduling and procedure for research that include steps from general expectations to specific methods of data generation, analysis and interpretation (Sulandari et al., 2020). There are three approaches that researchers may choose from for their studies, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. The qualitative research approach is relevant here as it is about understanding a specific phenomenon from the perspective of those knowledgeable about it (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Williams, 2015). As a researcher, I am open to learning from people's lived experiences of an event, a situation, or a set of circumstances.

1.7.3 Research design

I chose the PAR design for this study. PAR is a genre of action research: a systematic compilation and review of generating practical information for action and change (Kemmis et al., 2019; Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). MacDonald (2012) and Zuber-Skerritt (2018) define it as a democratic process where all participants explore current reality to improve or change it. As per Zikmund et al. (2009), a research design offers a plan setting out the procedures and strategies for gathering and analysing information needed for the study. A research design outlines the course of action for the entire research (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). A research design is chosen mainly based on the research questions, the intent, and the state of knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Wahyuni, 2012).

The teachers (see selection of participants under 1.7.4) and I will conduct the process in a recursive and dynamic way (Bramer & Chapman, 2017; Chapman, 2018) consisting of iterative cycles of action research, each moving through planning, action, observing and reflection (Banegas & Consoli, 2020; Zuber-Skerritt et al., 2020). Each cycle will address a secondary question of the study.

In Cycle One, we will try to answer the question: What are teachers' experiences awaiting support from the DBST?

In Cycle Two, we will be responding to the question: What strategies do teachers currently utilise and could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?

In Cycle Three, we wil be answering the question: What guidelines can be developed from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention?

1.7.4 Selection of participants

The execution of PAR begins with selecting participants who formed the project group. For this study, I chose the purposive sampling method to select participants. Purposive sampling is non-probability sampling, where the researcher consciously decides who the sample needs to include (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). To draw a purposive sample, the researcher selects participants because they have characteristics that the researcher desires (Maree & Pietersen, 2019b). I have specific characteristics in mind that the project group need to co-research with me, so I will be using this method to recruit them (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). For this study, the participants who are selected will satisfy these criteria:

1. qualified educators working full-time at a school in the Sedibeng West District of the Gauteng Province;

2. have experience in referring a learner for SBST intervention, and

3. are willing to participate voluntarily in this study.

I envisage having approximately six participants/co-researchers, so I will work with the school's office administrator as a gatekeeper to obtain entry to the school and recruit participants.

1.7.5 Data collection

For data generation, we will be using collages, reflective diaries, project group discussions and a World Café. Data collection consists of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, enabling one to answer research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes (Haris et al., 2020).

1.7.5.1 Collages

Collage is a mixed media technique that facilitates the expression of concepts that cannot be adequately expressed in words (Ramadhaniar & Lukito, 2020). The researchers will compile a collage to answer the first secondary research question (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010).

1.7.5.2 Reflective diaries

Reflective diaries will be used to capture researchers' activities, thoughts and feelings (Nadin & Cassell, 2006) during each cycle of the PAR. Reflective diaries are extensive field notes

maintained by researchers during the study and used for clarification, thus helping participants to understand their specific and personal experiences (Creswell, 2009). Researchers in this study will be using reflective diaries to record significant occurrences at every cycle stage.

1.7.5.3 Project group discussions

Project group discussions are debates/conversations on a specific topic to collect in-depth data about the group's experiences, behaviours and opinions on the identified topic (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). We will be holding project group discussions in the second cycle to answer the second secondary research question - *What strategies do teachers currently utilise, and could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?*

1.7.5.4 World Café

A World Café is an organised knowledge-sharing conversational method in which groups of people discuss a subject at several small tables (Lohr et al., 2020), like those in a café. Some formality can be maintained to ensure everyone gets an opportunity to speak (Bohm & Weinberg, cited by Ropes et al., 2020). While pre-defined questions may have been negotiated initially, results or approaches are not determined beforehand.

We will temporarily create a space like a café, with drinks and table cloths on tables to facilitate the café atmosphere. Participants will be seated at café-style tables with three participants at a table. We envisage to have three consecutive rounds of conversation of approximately 20 minutes each.

The participants at each table will be discussing the same question. After each round, the participants will move from their table to a new one, where they start their discussion with a new table host. One person as a host will be selected at each table by the members to stay at the table to relay the previous discussion to the next group of researchers. Three rounds of discussions will use the same question. Key ideas will be noted on large index cards at the centre of the table during each discussion session. We will conclude the process by agreeing on common awareness and possibilities and exchanging observations and perspectives after three rounds of discussion (Lohr et al., 2020).

In Chapter 4, the research methodology is discussed in more detail.

1.8 VALIDITY

Schneider (2012) emphasises the significance of validity in participatory research. Validity relates to the quality of the study, implementing the methods employed and the precision of the results

(Alshenqeeti, 2014; Noble & Smith, 2014; Noble & Smith, 2015). In PAR, overall validity can be ensured by following these five validity measures: process, dialogic, democratic, outcome validity and catalytic validity (Call-Cummings, 2017; Newton & Burgess, 2008; Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2014).

In this study, process and dialogic validity will hopefully achieved by allowing equal participation of all group members in the knowledge production process throughout all cycles (Call-Cummings, 2017). Proof of such participation will be provided through voice recordings, notes and reflective journals (Waddington, 2018). Catalytic validity is about capacity building and the value of people (Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2014), and this will be achieved by engaging all participants through the entire research process.

Democratic validity is about the recorded proof that research was conducted with teachers as co-researchers and not just participants; The World Café will ensure democratic validity (Newton & Burgess, 2008). Last, outcome validity refers to accomplishing or fulfilling the project objectives (Newton & Burgess, 2008; Waddington, 2018). The outcome validity test will determine whether the research questions are answered appropriately.

1.9 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

These ethical principles will be adhered to throughout this study:

1.9.1 Obtaining permission for the research

Before I commence with research, I will ensure that I have the approval of the Ethics Committee of the NWU Faculty of Education (Maree, 2019). I also will ensure that I obtain permission from the Gauteng Department of Education and the school's principal, and the School Governing Body (SGB).

1.9.2 Informed consent and the right to withdraw

For this study, participants will be given consent forms that invite them to participate voluntarily. The following information will be indicated on the form: the purpose of the study, the procedures and requirements, the confidentiality of the information and - but not limited to - the participants' right to withdraw at any time (Maree, 2019).

1.9.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

I accept the responsibility for maintaining confidentiality throughout the research process unless any participants would like to be acknowledged for their contribution to the study. Winter (cited by

MacDonald, 2012) and Smith (2008) propose that descriptions of others' work and points of view must be agreed-upon by all who participated in PAR before publishing the work.

1.9.4 Social value

All action research aims to impart social change through planned specific actions (Bargal, 2008). Therefore, the interests of all stakeholders will be considered throughout the study while change is sought through a collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention. Care will also be taken to ensure that no harm is caused to participants, but utmost respect and consideration will be displayed (Denscombe, 2010; Strydom & Delport, 2011; Maree & Pieterson, 2019a).

1.9.5 Beneficence

I will ensure that all the co-researchers in the study are handled according to ethical standards. High levels of integrity and consideration will be given to the research (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). I will also ensure that all data sets are kept safe, accessed, and used for the intended purpose.

1.10 CONCLUSION

In this Chapter I introduced the study and gave the background therefore including the problem statement. Research questions were detailed, the two theories that undergird this study were also was also introduced, concepts relevant to this study were defined followed by a brief discussion of the research methodology, methods of determining the validity of the study and outlining the ethical principles that were adhered to during the conduct of the research.

In Chapter 2, a literature study on learner support was conducted. In Chapter 3, the capacity and experiences of teachers regarding learner support was explored, focusing on how pre- and in-service teacher training prepare teachers to accommodate learners with barriers in their classrooms. Chapter 4 was about the participatory action research methodology and preliminary discussion of data. In Chapter 5 presented the findings of the study and the analysis of data. The study is concluded by presenting the guidelines of the interim support strategies that might be implemented by teachers as they wait for the DBST intervention.

CHAPTER 2 : THE CAPACITY AND EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS AND THE DBST REGARDING LEARNER SUPPORT: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will do a literature study on learner support. My objective is to explore learner support and barriers to learning in the local context, the role of support services and structures in learning support, and challenges regarding implementing learning/learner support. I commenced my discussion with the conceptual framework that influenced this study, followed by a debate on learner support in international and local contexts. An account of the SBSTs and the DBSTs will then be presented. As I close the chapter, I will deliberate on learner support challenges in South Africa.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework comprises chosen theories that underpin the researcher's thinking about how they comprehend and intend to investigate the research topic (Osanloo & Grant, 2016). In education, researchers might choose from various theories to help them address a specific research problem (Higgs, 2013). I decided on Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model and Seligman's positive psychology as theories that would underpin this study. Before that decision was made, three theories that support inclusive education were encountered and are described below to broaden the study's theoretical base.

- **Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning**

At its foundation, inclusive education is committed to raising the standard of education for all learners by ensuring that they all acquire the abilities, information, and values necessary to develop into critical thinkers and problem solvers (DBE, 2011; UNESCO, 2014). Education must be accessible to everyone, regardless of their challenges and differences, to meet this reality through adjustments and adaptations (Spinelli, 2002; UNESCO, 1994). A system of education that enhances the cognitive capacity of all is essential for the realisation of this ideal (Booysen, 2018). The support learners receive must be developmental, suitable and accommodating to their cognitive levels (Spinelli, 2002), because learners encounter various obstacles that prevent them from successfully acquiring subject knowledge – and to provide adequate support that empowers learners to learn to think critically and solve problems. The most popular and extensively used taxonomy, known as Bloom's Taxonomy, was created by Benjamin Bloom in 1956, giving educators the tools to provide instruction sensitive to various levels of reasoning and thinking, identify areas that need improvement, and take appropriate action (Spinelli, 2002).

The main goal of Bloom's Taxonomy is to organise educational purposes according to their cognitive complexity. Bloom wanted to provide a practical, helpful tool consistent with what was known about the characteristics of higher mental processes. He observed that the lower learning level influenced higher-order thinking. Learners must be able to remember material to understand, analyse, apply, and so on. Bloom recognised that instruction should be directed toward task design, so that learners are driven to realise the goals rather than only focusing on memorising *(*Armstrong, 2010). Booysen (2018) theorises that if teachers implement Bloom's Taxonomy in learner support effectively, they ought to be aware that knowledge is socially constructed, and that learners' cognitive development depends on their active involvement in learning and teaching. They should understand that knowledge is socially created, and active participation in teaching and learning is essential for learners' cognitive growth. This line of thinking aligns well with social constructivism (Buraphadeja & Dawson, 2008).

- **Social constructivism**

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, created a social learning theory known as social constructivism (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Vygotsky believed that individuals are active participants in creating their knowledge, that human growth is socially located, and knowledge is formed through interaction with others (Davis et al., 2017). Social constructivism strongly emphasises dyads and small groups (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015). Learning within this paradigm is participatory, occurring first on the social and individual levels (Lynch, 2016) and leading to growth through shared action (Bronack et al., 2006). Social constructivism in the context of inclusive education encourages the involvement of parents, siblings and the learner in the learning of a learner who experiences barriers to learning. According to Vygotsky, every child has a disability (Rodina, 2006). Still, the socio-cultural complexities leading to secondary disability exacerbate vulnerable children's problems (Tlale et al., 2016), implying that a child's personality is influenced more by his/her social surroundings than by the impairment (Rodina, 2006). Therefore, Vygotsky asserts that in supporting learners with barriers - teachers, psychologists, parents, and other role players should view disability from the "strength" rather than the "weakness" perspective (Tlale et al., 2016).

The systems theory described briefly below closely relates to social constructivism and how it affects learner support.

- **Systems theory**

Systems theory is the interdisciplinary study of systems created by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (Mele et al., 2010). Von Bertalanffy said every system is greater than its components (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998; Tlale et al., 2016). Its structure and role define a system, and its purpose is affected by its surroundings and expressed by interactions with other systems. Each system also has causal

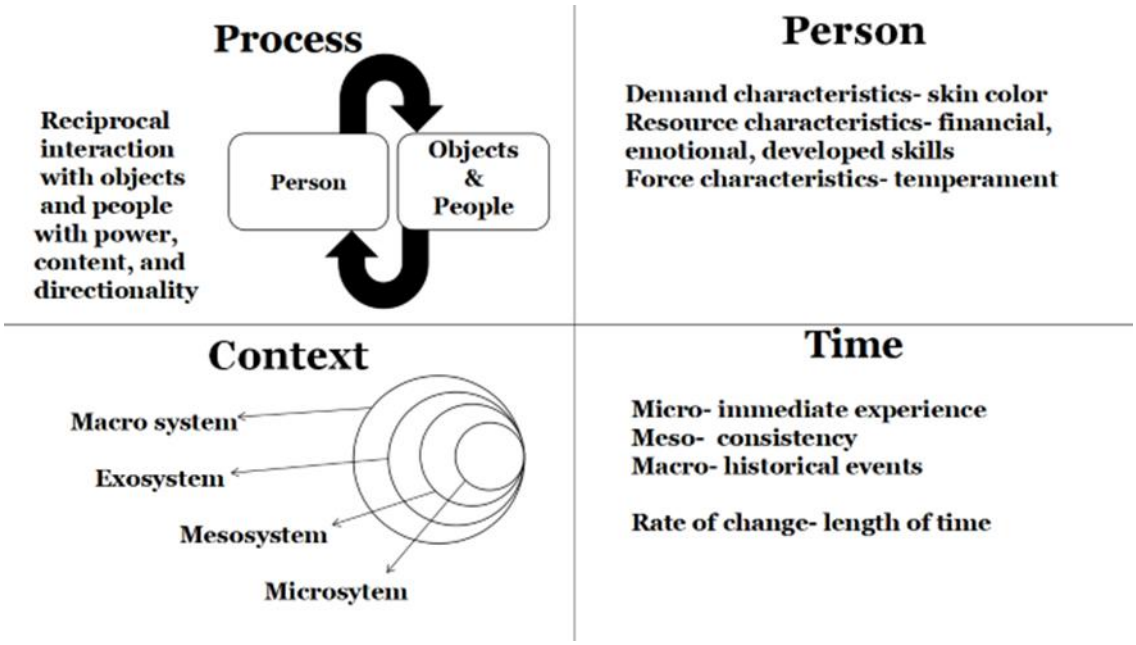
boundaries that regulate what permeates between it and other systems, sub-systems, and/or the environment (Donald et al., 2020). Natural systems are generally characterised by: 1) Patterns of functioning, meaning that all system parts affect the system; 2) Interdependence - changes in one component affect other parts. Similarly, events in one portion will affect other sections; 3) The whole system can interact with other surrounding systems. For example, a family interacts with the school, therapist or church. Within the system, sub-systems or specific groups usually interact with one another and affect the whole system. A learner referred to the DBST and waiting for help is simultaneously a system and a sub-system at a school (Tlale et al., 2016). He/she is affected by other systems with which he/she interacts. Thus, these systems' interactions and interdependence must be considered when providing support (Hay & Joubert, 2021).

The relevance of this theory is that much of the thinking surrounding the provision of learner support has its foundations in systems theory, according to Hay and Joubert (2021), which was later developed into Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model as discussed in 2.2.1.

2.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model

Between 1972 and 2005, Bronfenbrenner's ideas underwent three stages of development. The most recent stage, namely the bio-ecological theory, sees children as dynamic tools with various traits, including personality, temperament, and motivation (Tlale et al., 2016). The Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model was also created herewith (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The main aim of the (PPCT) model is to clarify that as children develop, they do so within communities, cultures, families and economies. These connections provide the background for understanding how the developing child’s environment and genetic make-up influence him/her and how that child influences his/her environment and genetic make-up (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model is graphically illustrated in Figure 2.1, and then discussed.



(Trummer, 2017)

Figure 0-1: Process, Person, Context, Time Model developed from Bronfenbrenner, 2005

2.2.1.1 Process

Bronfenbrenner's fundamental philosophy is that growth occurs while interactions between humans and their environment occur consistently over a prolonged period (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These interactions are complex (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Mahlo & Condy, 2016) and function to stimulate development (Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner calls these interactions *process* within the PPCT model (Tlale et al., 2016). According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), the definition of process is a person-to-person connection between individuals who form part of the micro-system, including interactions with symbols and objects in an individual's environment. Efficient development will occur when a person, and the environment initiate processes. Although reciprocal associations with objects and symbols are also included in proximal processes, the proximal processes are the regular activities and interactions between the teacher and the referred learner and teachers/schools' DBST (teacher-learner-DBST). Referred learners in the context of this study are identified as experiencing barriers and referred to professionals who are members of the DBST and considered experts. Research recognises teacher-learner relationships as significant to positive experiences in learners' academic lives, especially those with special needs (Lopez & Corcoran, 2014). Developing a good relationship with their teachers will make learners feel secure and at ease in their classrooms. A positive relationship between a learner and the teacher makes it more likely for learners to participate

consistently in class activities and take responsibility for their academic goals (Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010). The subsequent influence in the PPCT model is the *person*, as discussed next.

2.2.1.2 Person

In Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, the *person* refers to individual characteristics. Bronfenbrenner defined three kinds of personal characteristics: resource, demand and force characteristics (Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Tudge et al., 2009). Resource characteristics are not visible immediately. Resource characteristics include emotional and mental attributes such as skills, beliefs, attitudes and intelligence, including material resources (Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Tudge et al., 2009). Resource characteristics determine the ability of a person to communicate effectively during the proximal processes (Smit et al., 2020). Demand characteristics are individual traits, including physical qualities, gender, age, and skin tone (see Figure 2.1). According to Tudge et al. (2009), these characteristics may affect first interactions because of "person perceptions"- a term used in social psychology to describe subjective mental processes that people use to form impressions of others (Cherry, 2020). In education, teachers may create beliefs and conclusions about their learners based on appearances (Landsberg & Matthews, 2019). Teachers' impressions of the learner may influence their relationship and the learner's performance (Kyriakides et al., 2013; Whittle, 2018). Lastly, force characteristics comprise but are not limited to the variances in temperament, self-efficacy and resilience (Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model requires that attention be paid to the characteristics of the learner (developing child), the processes they engage in, and the context as strategies for supporting referred learners.

2.2.1.3 Context

Context denotes a setting that comprises four connected systems: the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system and macro-system (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Tudge et al., 2009). The micro-system refers to a collection of interrelated activities, social roles, and interpersonal contacts that the growing individual encounters in a particular face-to-face situation with specific physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit sustained, increasingly complex interaction with, and activity in the immediate environment. This represents the system within which the proximal processes occur. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) bio-ecological framework, individuals usually spend time in more than one micro-system. The micro-system represents a bi-directional contact between people and their immediate environments, such as interpersonal relationships, family, school and peer groups, in the immediate physical and social environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The meso-system is a collection of constantly interacting micro-systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Rosa & Tudge, 2013). For instance, the transition to an inclusive education system and how it is explained to teachers may affect how they react, either positively or negatively. If a teacher responds favourably to inclusion, the same influence will be felt by the learners in the school and vice versa. How the teacher adjusts to inclusion will also affect the communication between the school/teacher and the parents/therapists. However, increasing the number of learners with significant obstacles might cause teachers to feel and act adversely toward inclusion (Payne-van Staden, 2015).

The connection between the school, the district and the teachers may influence the meso-system (Sethosa, 2001). Thus, it is critical to recognise how the teacher interacts with all the micro-systems in her/his environment that may affect the learners' academic engagement (Taylor & Gebre, 2016).

It is noted that a person is influenced by the settings in which she/he participates actively. Other contexts, called exo-systems, are those in which the individual is not actively involved, but events that occur in such systems influence what happens in the environment, including the growing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1993) defines exo-systems as the links and processes between at least two settings, at least one of which does not include the developing person but in which things happen that have an indirect impact on processes in the developing person's immediate surroundings. For example, the referred learner does not connect directly with the DBST. However, the DBST's actions in providing support to the school affect the learner's development.

Finally, the macro-system comprises the overall pattern of a particular culture or subculture's micro-systems, meso-systems, and exo-systems concerning belief systems, material resources, lifestyles, knowledge and values.

2.2.1.4 Time

According to Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), a child's development results from engaging with people, symbols and objects in close environments in activities that become gradually more complex over extended periods. The development is strongly influenced by historical circumstances and events within which the individual exists (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Tonge et al. (2019) argue that the time, and the timing of the learner-teacher interactions are crucial to the child's development. The authors contend that different tasks require different amounts of attention and energy, so asking a child to do an activity that requires intense attention or energy at the wrong time can cause unsettling, detached behaviour. Equally important is time as it relates to this study.

In this study's context, time denotes the waiting period during which the learner who experiences barrier(s) to learning is referred to the DBST for intervention - and when the intervention is eventually effected. According to Majoko and Pasha (2018), in 2015, nearly 120,000 learners had difficulties in ordinary schools, waiting for the DBST to assist. The length of the waiting period differs from province to province (Human Rights Watch, 2019) even though the policy (DBE, 2014) stipulates that the DBST must meet every month to deliberate on interventions, verifications and concessions. Motitswe (2014) posits that the waiting period for DBST intervention sometimes becomes too long because professionals such as psychologists are thinly spread, and cannot attend to all the referrals and leave some unattended.

A short(er) waiting period is preferable to have referred learners wait long for DBST interventions. Learners often drop out of school when the waiting period is extended (Dreyer, 2017). Jones (2011) proposes that the high dropout rate in South Africa, which is among the worst globally, is due to a lack of stimulation and support, among other factors. According to Pather (2011), in South Africa, 20% of learners drop out of school after Grade 3. In 2011, 40% after Grade 9, 60% after Grade 10, and 70% after Grade 11 (Pather, 2011). According to Writer (2020), the general household survey for the years 2016-2018 reveals that 31% of learners drop out of school after attaining Grade 3, 11% after Grade 9, 15% after Grade 10, and 24% after Grade 11. Forty-six per cent of the learners who dropped out of school during this period were experiencing barriers to learning, 28% of which were extrinsic and 18% intrinsic. Though there has been a decline in school dropouts since 2011, this number is still high since it represents 5 million learners out of 12 million enrolled (Writer, 2020). Early identification of warning signs and support for at risk learners and early referrals are recommended by Sing and Maringe (2020) as possible interventions to restrain the high dropout rates. According to Pesova et al. (2014), dropping out of school is one consequence of delayed learner support. Learners often experience a decline in motivation and self-esteem while waiting for interventions from knowledgeable others. Kriel and Livingston (2019) emphasise the importance of learner support by pointing out that difficulties in learning due to late identification and intervention may continue into adulthood. In most cases, learners who receive early support show academic improvement and improved emotional development.

This study focuses on the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention, and Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model is directly relevant to this study because of its holistic perspective on the development of a learner. Learners do not enter the educational system as clean slates; rather, they are affected by and affect the world around them (Wilson & Peterson, 2006); this should be considered when addressing barriers that any learner might experience. In addressing such barriers, it should also be borne in mind that other factors/ systems and the environment affect how appropriate an intervention will be.

Similar to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model is positive psychology. Both theories have extended the century-old medical paradigm. Bronfenbrenner, through the ecological systems theory and later the bio-ecological model, shifted the focus from only attending to the intrinsic factors that contribute to a child's need to look at a broader range of circumstances and interactions. Likewise, positive psychology has successfully moved from the traditional pathology approach to providing learner support based on strengths. It focuses on recognising and cultivating individuals' strengths (Park & Peterson, 2008) that "make life worth living" to create the good aspects in life as an alternative to fixing the undesirable and pushing individuals to become ordinary (Pluskota, 2014).

2.2.2 Positive psychology

According to Seligman (2013), positive psychology is about well-being, and flourishing is the measure thereof. Positive psychology aims to maximise flourishing. Ackerman (2021) defines flourishing as the pursuit of and engagement in an authentic life that provides inner fulfilment and happiness through achieving objectives, pursuing interests, and celebrating successes despite life's ups and downs. Hefferon and Boniwell (2011) define flourishing as a state full of vitality, positivity, and positive mental health to thrive and prosper in private and social settings. Seligman (2013, 2019) identifies five elements contributing to well-being and flourishing. These elements are summarised in the acronym PERMA; positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Seligman 2013, 2019) (see Figure 2.2 below). Flourishing is also defined as the capacity to experience these five elements to enhance, deepen, and expand one's life (Ramones, 2011; Satici et al., 2013). Seligman's positive psychology is directly relevant to this study because it focuses on flourishing. According to Rothmann and Redelinghuys (2020), flourishing employees exhibit various optimistic work-related attitudes, and feel safe and supported at work. Flourishing employees are also mentally, cognitively, and physically invested in their work. They think they are essential organisation members, demonstrating constructive attitudes toward others' abilities and diversity (Cann, 2020). Flourishing teachers would voluntarily support learners, colleagues and management (Rothmann et al., 2019) to also – in this study's case - implement learning support. They would probably also tap into internal resources to overcome challenges posed by the unavailability of the DBST to support learners awaiting intervention. However, as Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) reported, support for South African teachers is irregular, uneven, and for many, simply non-existent. Mashau (2019) reiterates that support facilities are non-existent or inaccessible. In agreement with the writer's assertion, a study by Briner and Dewberry (2007) revealed a connection between teachers' well-being and learners' academic success. The well-being and flourishing of teachers can influence learner achievement and vice versa (Clarke, 2020). Thus, concerning learner support, teachers must pay attention to their well-being to help learners flourish. Teachers would be more equipped to fulfil

their job as empathetic, caring supporters and to deal with the difficulties brought on by their work environments if they could improve their well-being (Fredrickson, 2013). However, as Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) reported, support for South African teachers is irregular, uneven, and for many, simply non-existent. Mashau (2019) echoed these sentiments, as stated above. Some studies show that teachers who cultivate PERMA are better positioned to improve learner outcomes (Oppenheimer et al., 2014; Quinlan et al., 2014; Wayment et al., 2010).

(Seligman, 2011)

Figure 0-2: The PERMA model of well-being

2.2.2.1 Positive emotions

Hefferon and Boniwell (2011) theorise that when individuals experience primary positive emotions such as happiness, their minds open up, and they can "think out of the box." In positive psychology, happiness is used broadly to reflect overarching general pleasure or displeasure about how things are going in life. Selva (2021) and Chorro et al. (2017) reiterate that emotionally encouraged and happy children have better academic and emotional results. Chorro et al. (2017) further assert that neuroscience shows that positive emotions are critical in learning. Research shows that teacher well-being modifies their learners' emotional and academic outcomes (Clarke, 2020), so the teacher and learner happiness should be the primary goal in educational settings. Hardman (2020) states that one of the teacher's prominent roles in learner support should be to intervene to transform the learners' feelings of distress into more positive emotions of well-being,

such as happiness. According to Donald et al. (2020), there are three levels of interaction (school classroom, home and peers) that the teacher should consider for intervention in transforming learners' feelings of distress into happiness. Learners who feel positive emotions become more aware, resilient, and physically healthier (Fredrickson et al., 2008). However, achieving positive emotions is only the beginning; the next step in ensuring that learners flourish academically would be engagement and flow in the classroom (Reschly et al., 2008).

2.2.2.2 Engagement / optimal experience and flow

Another crucial positive psychology focus is Csikszentmihalyi's study of optimal human experiences. An optimal working situation could be occasions when people function thoroughly and efficiently. Positive psychology describes a situation as 'being flowing' (Kawabata & Mallett, 2016). Flow is a term used to describe a condition of intense concentration on the desired activity that leads to complete absorption of the individual in her/his particular task (Csikszentmihalyi cited in Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2018). People feel totally in charge during these periods of high output because they are not exerting any real effort. Since they are engulfed in the moment, they lose track of time and often feel as if time moves much faster than average (Csikszentmihalyi as cited by Kawabata & Mallett, 2016). When teachers have clear goals regarding learners' support of learning barriers in their classrooms, participation will be continuous and engaging (inferred from Kawabata & Mallett, 2016; Seligman, 2013). Engagement might also increase when teachers immediately understand how they are doing, how learners react, and whether results and participation improve. Finally, there must be a good match between the activity's difficulty and skill levels. Individuals who perform above their means or with usual difficulties and ability levels are generally in optimal flow. So, complexity must be increased gradually during engagement activities to benefit the learner. Positive relations furthermore positively influence the learner, contribute positively to learning, and promote well-being (Nishioka, 2019).

Positive relationships and their impact on learner support are discussed next.

2.2.2.3 Positive relationships

Three levels of interaction that could be harnessed to create change in the learner's performance are school, classroom, home and peers. These levels of interaction in the Bronfenbrenner theory are the micro-systems of the learner. The significance of relationships and interactions within the micro-system is that they shape many cognitive, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development aspects. According to Rimm-Kaufman and Hamre (2010), improving learners' relationships with systems at the micro level have significant, positive and enduring consequences for learners' academic and social development (Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010). Thus, it might be beneficial for the teacher to involve the referred parents, siblings and peers in

providing support to the learner while awaiting the DBST support since the learner's micro-system directly influences the cognitive, social, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects (Donald et al., 2020).

Parents' primary role in their children's education is to recognise barriers to learning and create action plans to overcome them (DBE, 2014; DoE, 2005). By establishing collaborative relationships with parents, siblings and the community, the teacher can intervene effectively in the learner's life (Donald et al., 2020). Minke et al. (2014) suggest that parents with positive relationships with teachers are better positioned to support their children by creating consistency between school standards and home. Studies have shown that some children appear more effective in the classroom when parents are active in their children's schools (Jeynes, 2011; Lunts, 2003). Teachers who closely connect with parents better understand their learners' lives at home, allowing them to adapt classroom instruction to accommodate learners' academic requirements (Jeynes, 2011).

Similarly, the teachers can solicit support from siblings since adolescents often seek guidance from older siblings when dealing with concerns inside and outside the family (McHale et al., 2012). Sibling support can also help manage new challenges during early adolescence, particularly for younger siblings who can benefit from older siblings' experience and advice. Kramer et al. (2019) hypothesise that siblings, especially the older ones, are well-positioned to provide approaches for managing family dynamics and those that arise in broader contexts like schools and communities during growth. The Updegraff et al. (2005) study revealed that near-age siblings are often more receptive to instruction and counsel on delicate personal matters than parents or teachers. However, a near-age sibling is a developing child her/himself, and the task of supporting learners with barriers might be too serious to handle. The role of recognising barriers to learning and creating action plans to overcome these barriers mainly lies with the parent (s) (DBE, 2014) and the teachers since they are the main drivers in learner support (DoE, 2001). Any action, journey, or research goal is to accomplish the pre-set goal. Likewise, the purpose of inclusive education and, by default, learner support is to see that every learner of school going age is included and participating in education (UNESCO, 1994).

Chances of accomplishment of a task are increased if the task is meaningful to those performing it.

2.2.2.4 Meaning

In positive psychology, meaning refers to belonging to and serving something one believes is more significant than the self (Seligman, 2013). According to Rothmann and Redelinghuys (2020), meaning at work refers to people's sense of importance to their organisations. Seligman

(2013) suggests that for workers to perceive their roles as meaningful, they must interpret them as purposeful. Therefore, for teachers to derive meaning in supporting learners with barriers, they have to view their interventions as effective in addressing learners' barriers and serving a purpose greater than themselves. For example: contributing to the development guidelines for interim support strategies that will be used even after the research has ended.

Closely related to meaning is the concept of accomplishment.

2.2.2.5 Accomplishment

Mastery, competence and achievement mastery are other terms for accomplishment in PERMA (Madeson, 2017). Accomplishment comes from working toward and completing a task, achieving objectives, and having the drive to complete the task at hand. People may look back on his/her life with pride, which enhances their well-being (Seligman, 2012). In inclusive education, accomplishment would mean that all learners participate in education regardless of their differences (Florian, 2014). The theory suggests that positive emotions are evoked in the learner and the teacher, which brings a feeling of accomplishment. They are both engaged in learning and teaching helped by the immediate support structure (school, family, peers). Engagement in other literature – also called participation - is deepened and more meaningful and leads to the accomplishment of the task. In this case, continuous learning and support is implied while awaiting DBST intervention since the goal is to develop the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention through learner support.

Subsequent to this discussion about the theoretical framework of the study, the focus is now turned to an analysis of *learner support*.

2.3 LEARNER SUPPORT

Learners are frequently confronted with learning difficulties due to various experiences at home, in the classroom, in the community, at school, and due to extrinsic and intrinsic factors, health issues or impairments. These extrinsic and intrinsic learning difficulties are termed "barriers to learning" and/or “learning barriers” (DBE, 2014). Learner support encompasses all actions that improve a school's ability to adapt to a multiplicity of academic needs and promote successful learning and teaching for all learners. It may also be described as any action that will enhance a school's capacity to accommodate diversity and promote effective instruction and learning for everyone (DoE, 2005; Mahlo & Condy, 2016), making it an essential component of all teaching. Learner support assists learners, teachers, and the system in meeting the full range of learning requirements and addressing or overcoming barriers to learning (DoE, 2001). It is implemented differently in different countries, depending on the country’s economic and social situation, among

other factors. It is befitting to begin the discussion on learner support by looking at how some other countries implement it.

2.3.1 International perspectives on learner support

Different countries have varying viewpoints on the ideal support for learners with barriers (Haug, 2017; Mangope et al., 2018; Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007). Implementing learner support differs from one country to another according to the country's specific context and availability of resources (Fernando et al., 2020). According to Mangope et al. (2018), there is the "moderates" view that inclusion requires the use of special schools for those children who need it and the "universalists" who think special schools need to be eliminated (Lauchlan & Greig, 2015). Although Lauchlan and Greig (2015) agree with Mangope et al. (2018) on these two perspectives, they are not oblivious, in reality, of inclusion and, by implication, accept that learner support is far more complicated. In Italy, for example, for over 40 years, the "absolute inclusion" paradigm, as championed by universalists, has been the norm, with policies and legislation dating to the 1970s (Ianes et al., 2020). In Scotland, inclusive education is based on the "presumption of mainstreaming," and learners requiring additional support are taught in a mainstream school unless exceptional circumstances apply (Riddell & Carmichael, 2019). Special and mainstream schools co-exist for the child's holistic development and realise their fullest potential (Barrett et al., 2015; Education Scotland, 2021).

Learner support in Australia is not implemented homogeneously by the states across Australia (Boyle et al., 2020). In some states, learners are placed in regular classrooms and participate in all the school's curriculum activities. In other states, learners needing additional support are placed in a setting separate from the mainstream (Forlin et al., 2013). In Victoria and Tasmania, partial inclusion is being practiced with special classes, centres or units on the premises of a regular school (Forlin et al., 2013). According to Boyle et al. (2020), each state uses its criteria to identify learners needing additional support. The provision varies according to each state's interpretation of the need and the available resources. However, many states have adopted assistant teachers' employment as the critical strategy or "solution to inclusion" (Rutherford, 2012), like in the United Kingdom (UK) and USA.

In Central America, the Mexican government provides separate educational facilities for children with special needs. They are prepared for future inclusion in general education classrooms when that option becomes available. Similar to South Africa, the support given to learners with barriers includes accommodations, the adaptation of classroom space, special education teacher support and differentiation of curriculum and assessment (Agrawal et al., 2019; Francis et al., 2021). In the UK, most SEN learners get their education full-time in ordinary classes with additional help as needed (UK Department of Education, 2001). According to Finkelstein et al. (2021), when learners

are educated in one classroom despite their differing needs, academics and socio-emotional outcomes seem positive for learners with and without barriers. Suppose the learner's progress is unsatisfactory after the learning coordinator has developed an individualised support plan: in that case, the learner is referred to external agencies for education intervention (UK Department of Education, 2001), as is the practice in South Africa. Smith et al. (2018) state that waiting periods for intervention in Scotland are significantly long, which echoes Hayes and Bulat (2017) and Viennet and Pont's (2017) assertions that many countries struggle to connect policy and practice.

2.3.2 Learner support in South Africa

Segregation in education based on race, and disability was prevalent under the former apartheid regime (Hess, 2020; Savolainen et al., 2012; Thobejane, 2005). There were separate education departments for different demographic groups, and there were noticeable differences in the allocation of resources, educational rights, expectations and opportunities (Payne-van Staden, 2015). Special needs education was disjointed, not only by apartheid laws that required academic racial segregation but by other policies and practices that distinguished between "normal" learners and those who were labelled as having special needs (Engelbrecht, 2006; Stofile & Green, 2007; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Special schools or classes were solely for white learners with impairments, and most of these special schools were located close to large cities; so many learners from rural areas could not reach these (Links, 2009). Only a small portion of black learners with impairments could access education since few special schools were assigned to black Africans compared to other races (DoE, 2001; Links, 2009; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Most black learners with barriers either dropped out of school or were placed in ordinary schools, but support services for these learners were insufficient (DoE, 2001; Naicker, 2006). Learners with impairments were kept at home in many African communities because they were a shame to the family and society (Links, 2009). Education support and the curriculum did not meet the different requirements of learners, resulting in many dropouts and failures (DoE, 2001).

When South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, a new constitution that included the Bill of Rights, which guarantees access to basic education to all South Africans, was legislated. Many other policies sought to ensure that all learners of school going age are accommodated by the education system and that appropriate resources are availed for learners with different learning demands (Savolainen et al., 2012). Freedom, human dignity, the promotion of human rights, equality and freedom, form the foundation of the Bill of Rights. These ideals need to be blended into a unified inclusive education system to guarantee that all learners, with and without impairments, can reach their full learning potential (DoE, 2001; Links, 2009). Inclusive education in South Africa is based on a rights viewpoint inspired by critical, liberal and democratic philosophy (Du Plessis, 2013), emphasising equality and human rights (Savolainen et al., 2012).

Before establishing the promotion of inclusion, learners were supported by the medical deficit model (Mahlo & Condy, 2016; Nel et al., 2016; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). This model focuses on illness, pathology, and treating learning difficulties as a disease that needs to be cured (Gutkin, 2012). Applying the medical deficit model in education means that any learner with a difference or an impairment is picked out, and the impairment is presumed to be within the learner - therefore, such a learner must be treated so he/she can fit into the system (Mfuthwana, 2016; Ojageer, 2019; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Adopting this concept results in a belief system that sees learners as disadvantaged, needing fixing, deficient and beyond support (Beaudry, 2016). The learner is considered a patient who requires diagnosis and therapy in the medical deficit paradigm (Glazzard, 2015). Thus, when a learner is discovered as having problems, professional health specialists are required to act. Due to this intervention, learners are labelled and removed from ordinary classes to undergo specialised assistance (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). This paradigm focuses on the learners' deficiency. It is believed that normal learners are those who do not encounter learning barriers, whereas abnormal learners are those who do. Therefore, failure is primarily a person's fault rather than that of a system. This viewpoint limits the extent of learner assistance since none of the role players operate in seclusion. According to Bronfenbrenner (1993, 1999), Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), and Rosa and Tudge (2013), all individuals are affected by the multiple systems they interact with. So at the dawn of a new era in South Africa, it was recognised that the time had come to shift away from the medical deficit model of supporting learners to a more social approach that would cater for all more equitably. That was the beginning of a move towards a social model of learner support.

2.3.2.1 A move towards a social model

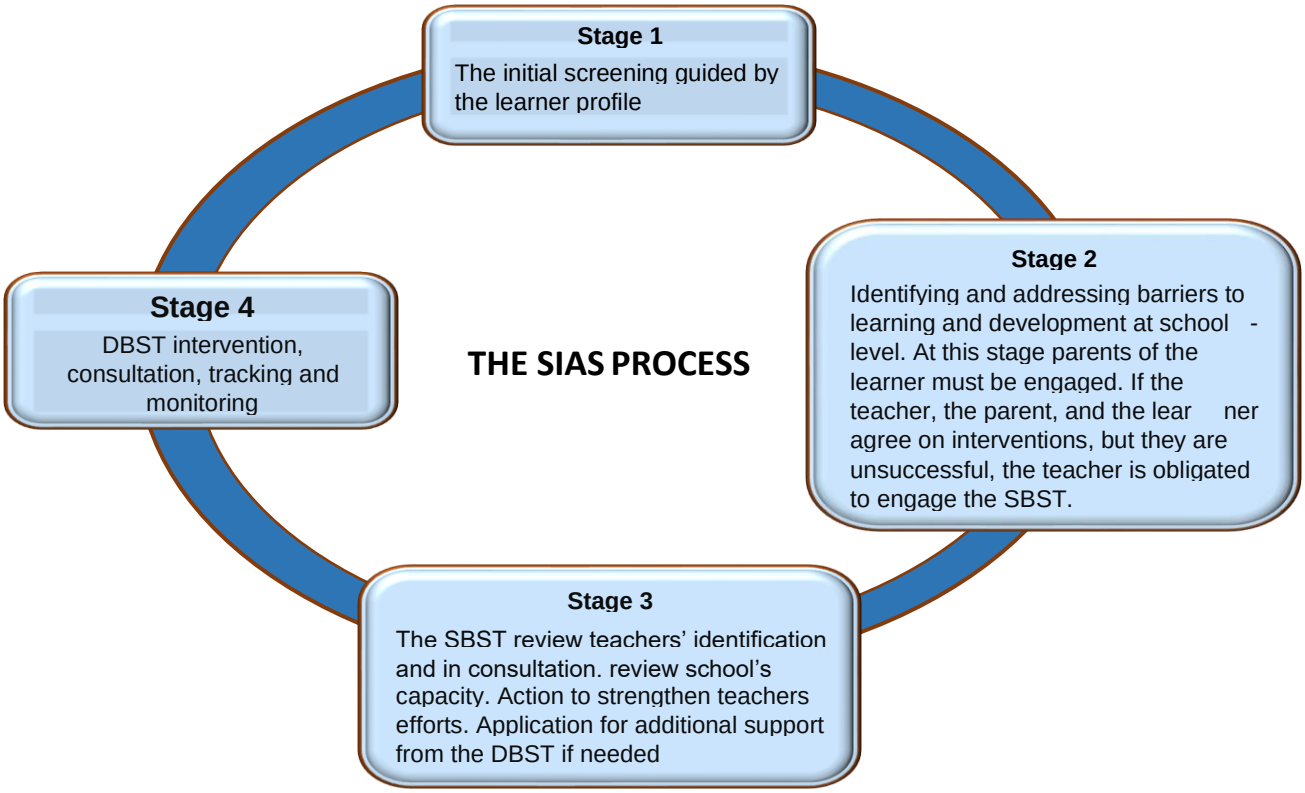
A paradigm change towards a social-ecological model was necessary from the mid to late 1990s due to criticism of the medical deficit model (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). This paradigm change has led to significant educational reform in South Africa regarding how learners with barriers are supported. One of the most critical developments from this shift was a fundamental overhaul of special needs education legislation and educational frameworks. The terminology “barriers to learning and development” (DoE, 2001) was favoured over special needs education (Dreyer, 2015; Swart & Pettipher, 2019); “remedial education” was replaced by learning support (Bouwer, 2019), and “disability” was only used when referring to medical conditions that lead to barriers to learning and development (DoE, 2001). The social model is profoundly rooted in the human rights discourse, advocating for equality and removing obstacles that prohibit learners with impairments from participating in educational offerings (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). The policy on SIAS was legislated to facilitate a move toward the social model of learner support in South Africa, with the latest version published in 2014. SIAS seeks to establish the standardisation for procedures for the screening, identification, assessment and provision of intervention for all learners who want

more assistance to increase their involvement and interest in class (DBE, 2014). The SIAS policy endeavours to avail learning opportunities to learners vulnerable to exclusion.

With the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services' (NCESS) 1997 report, the move to make education more inclusive began. The NCSNET and the NCESS were elected by the minister of education in 1996 to draft a strategy for effectively implementing inclusive education. The DoE ultimately issued the combined report of these two bodies in 1998. The study suggested that the education and training system promotes education for everyone and fosters the development of welcoming and inclusive educational institutions. The report recommended that the education and training system should encourage participation for all and nurture the growth of inclusive and supportive learning institutions, enabling active engagement from all learners in the educational process, cultivating and expanding their potential, and engaging in society as equal members (DoE, 2001). The report also laid the conceptual groundwork for inclusive education in South Africa, allowing for a deeper comprehension of the many factors that hinder effective learning. It was proposed in the report that acceptable and respectful terminology be used to explain concepts in inclusive education.

2.3.2.1.1 The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) procedure for determining required support

The number of learners with barriers attending ordinary public schools has been on the rise since the inception of inclusive education (Engelbrecht et al., 2017; Nel et al., 2016) from 77,000 to 121,461 between 2002 and 2018 (Parliamentary Monitoring Group [PMG], 2016). However, including learners with barriers in ordinary public schools has not translated into inclusion in education because their needs are not adequately catered for (Human Rights Watch, 2019). As part of the EWP6, the SIAS is used to determine, uncover and address barriers to learning and offer guidelines and structure for providing support for learners that need aid. The diagramme below represents the SIAS process.



(inferred from SIAS: DBE, 2014)

Figure 0-3: Summary of the SIAS process

Stage 1: The initial screening stage

As a learner support instrument, the SIAS intends to standardise the methods for identifying, assessing, and assisting learners that need extra support to expand their engagement and inclusion in schools (DBE, 2014). Learner support removes obstacles to inclusion while acknowledging learners' capacity to develop and achieve maximal independence. Learner support necessitates the consideration of interacting systems in providing support to learners with barriers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This entails acquiring complete information on the learner's environment, including his/her family, neighbourhood, and school (DBE, 2014; DoE, 2001). At this stage, teachers, learners, and their families are involved in learner support. A functional SBST is required due to the complexity of learner support required (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). Screening and recording results in the learner profile for all learners at the start of each year or term is a good place to start with learner support. The enrolling teacher must review the following records during the initial screening stage:

- paperwork for admission;

- immunisation records;
- reports on the integrated school health programme;
- end-of-year results (included in the learner profile);
- reports by stakeholders and parents; and
- report from the learner's present teacher.

During the initial testing, if a learner is classified as vulnerable or at risk, it becomes the duty of the recommending teacher to take on the position of a case manager who oversees the support procedure and initiates Stage 2 of the process (DBE, 2014).

Stage 2: Recognising and addressing barriers to learning and development at the school level

According to the SIAS (DBE, 2014), when the teacher has identified the learner(s) at risk, he/she must compile an individual support (ISP) plan in collaboration with the parent or caregiver to support the learner to achieve a well-coordinated plan. An ISP is a strategy intended to help learners who need more assistance or have specific needs. After implementing the ISP, the barriers might be overcome, and learners' performance may improve. If it is discovered that the ISP proves ineffective, the teacher should contact the SBST to schedule an appointment and convey the learner's requirements to the team for further discussion (DoE, 2005; DBE, 2014). For all participants of the SBST concerned, the referring teacher should organise a panel discussion. Consensus decisions are made following a comprehensive approach in which the SNA 1, 2 and Form DBE 126, Health and Disability Assessment Form, and all other related aspects are considered. The final decision on the next step should be made in collaboration with the SBST (DoE, 2005; DBE, 2014). This might include applying for accommodations, curriculum differentiation, strengthening the ISP, etc. The learner's parents must be involved because the parents' primary role in their children's education is to recognise barriers to learning and growth and create action plans to overcome these barriers (DBE, 2014). According to Alber (2014), some children appear more effective in the classroom when parents are active in their children's schools. Maluleke's (2015) argument echoes Bronfenbrenner's theory that positive experiences in the proximal processes support the development and practical learning. Little involvement of parents is an obstacle to learning that must be addressed to enhance the learner's educational experience (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Stage 3: Finding and eliminating barriers to learning at the school and district level

If the SBST determines that an accommodation/concession is the best choice for that learner at that time, the accommodation/concession that will best benefit the learner will be decided on and discussed with the parents to obtain their consent in DBE 124 and to inform them (the parents) of what the accommodation would entail. Form DBE 124 must be completed for all learners in Gr R to 9, for whom accommodation is recommended by the SBST and sent to the District-Based Assessment Committee (DBAC) on form DBE 120. The DBST will, upon receipt of the documents mentioned above from the SBST:

- Examine the teacher's and SBST's action plans using the Guidelines for Support (GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORT in the SNA3). According to the descriptors, the DBST will determine the level of support needed or the accommodations proposed (DBE, 2014).

- The District Concessions/Accommodations Committee, the decision-making body, regarding granting accommodations and concessions consist of the Assessment Coordinator who chairs this committee, a senior psychologist, a learning support coordinator and other officials who may assist in assessing a particular case. The committee should meet at least once a month to conduct a verification procedure in which applications are accepted or rejected (DBE, 2014).

The SIAS process facilitates a move toward a social model and inclusion (Du Plessis, 2013; Hess, 2020) and reduces the number of learners placed in special schools if it is not essential (Dalton et al., 2012). According to Engelbrecht et al. (2013), the problem with placing learners in special education is that most of these learners do not make sufficient progress in returning to the ordinary; they grow increasingly separated from their peers. As a consequence, many cannot integrate into society completely. Exclusion may become the norm. This is worse than unnecessarily placing learners in special education and ignoring the SIAS and leaving learners unsupported in ordinary classrooms (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000; Naicker, 2006). According to Wolfenberger (as cited by Pather, 2011), the normalisation principle indicates that putting special needs kids in settings with typical chronological peers will result in normative changes in conduct and self-esteem given the necessary support. Yet, some teachers have been seen disregarding inclusive policy practices that demand the assistance of learners who face barriers to learning (Hess, 2020) by simply leaving them unsupported. This implies that no assistance for learners who face learning challenges is offered because schools fail to ensure that every teacher participates in learner support (Mason, 2016; Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Effective implementation of the SIAS will guarantee that all learners are engaged in their studies (Matolo & Rambuda, 2021). Positive psychology theory suggests that learners should be engaged

and feel that their engagement is meaningful; then they stand a great chance of accomplishing their task, encouraging them to continue engaging, completing a task and thereby flourishing (Seligman, 2012). Even though the SIAS is focused on providing support to learners at varying degrees in ordinary schools, in some instances, it becomes necessary to place learners in special schools, which can better assist learners who face significant learning challenges instead of keeping them in ordinary schools, unsupported (Erradu, 2012). When transferring learners to special schools, a medical examination is required to assess a learner's assistance requirements, and the medical practitioners must complete the relevant form. The parents should then be informed about the outcomes of the assessment to ensure that learners benefit from the resources at special schools (DBE, 2014). Special schools are equipped to support learners with serious learning difficulties. Those with moderate or minor learning barriers may be supported in ordinary or full-service schools (DBE, 2010; Jacobs, 2015).

2.3.2.1.2 Full-Service Schools (FSS)

The establishment of FSSs is one of the critical inclusion methods directed by EWP 6, and the Guidelines for Full-Service Schools released by the DBE in 2015. According to these policies, an FSS is resourced and supported to meet a variety of learning requirements of all learners (DoE, 2001). One of the critical methods in the Department of Education's 20-year plan to change the education system into an inclusive one was the creation of 30 pilot FSS in nine districts. FSS foster an inclusive culture and practice that will benefit the school in all areas (Engelbrecht et al., 2016; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). FSS are intended to coordinate area clusters for inclusive education following collaborative principles by assisting surrounding schools and teachers in changing inclusive practices. FSS should assist a functional SBST; assist neighbouring schools in transitioning to inclusive education; interact closely with special schools as resource centres in sharing knowledge and skills; and collaborate closely with the DBST (Engelbrecht et al., 2016; DoE, 2005). The following values guide a FSS:

- **Guiding principles and values in full-service schools**
    - Implementing a flexible and all-inclusive method to learning in a cooperative atmosphere, where all are accountable for the education of learners, so they can become change agents in the communities where they are situated.
    - Supporting a movement in how schools approach learning impediments, such as disability. FSSs must advocate for disadvantaged learners, including those with disabilities, chronic illnesses, learning challenges, and social, emotional, and behavioural issues. FSS show how all children of school age may go to school and reach their full potential (DBE, 2010a).

- FSS are accountable for devising techniques to help curriculum and institutional change to meet a variety of obstacles and learning needs of learners. A well-run full-service school can give examples of curriculum and inclusive teaching practice as a resource for other schools and teachers attempting to achieve inclusion (DoE, 2005).

- FSS should adapt to diversity and handle various learning challenges. They should offer adequate education and facilities that cater to each learner's requirements, regardless of their barriers (DoE, 2005, 2010; UNESCO, 1994).

- Full-service schools should be adequately resourced for inclusion. While teachers and school leadership are essential, in FSS, enough resources such as safe, secure and accessible buildings for teachers and learners, facilitators, sufficient personnel and collaborative networks are required to accommodate all learners (DBE, 2010a). The DBST should also transport all learners who need it. The schools also need access to adaptations like braille and software that reduce learners' barriers. As crucial as having physical resources to accommodate learners of all levels is, the infrastructure must also be inclusive (DoE, 2001). This would include accessibility features, such as wheelchair ramps and at least one wheelchair-accessible restroom per school.

- Collaboration and networking should be prioritised. As with all-inclusive education initiatives, a collective working approach is critical for FSSs to operate well. FSSs should collaborate with the DBST and special schools (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). FSSs have the potential to become collaborative centres where collaborative concepts and practices are held and implemented. However, implementing learner support in full-service schools has been difficult, with many challenges, such as those elucidated hereafter.

- **Challenges of the full-service schools**

The theory supporting FSS development and the reality inside these schools are not always synchronised. Even though the system met its quantitative target of transforming/building 510 FSSs, it has been claimed that the DoE did not offer adequate transition assistance (PMG, 2017). Examples are inadequate learning materials, a lack of physical infrastructure, and poor or inaccessible DBSTs. FSSs continue to adopt the medical deficit model and put learners in special needs classrooms without enough support, resources, or training, failing to fulfil their duty to provide inclusive, ordinary education for all learners (Human Rights Watch, 2019). FSSs are not running at total capacity, according to the DoE (2001). There is no uniformity in how learners with barriers are discovered, evaluated and accommodated (DBE, 2015). According to Conway (2017), some full-service teachers are ambivalent about the significance of inclusion and are more

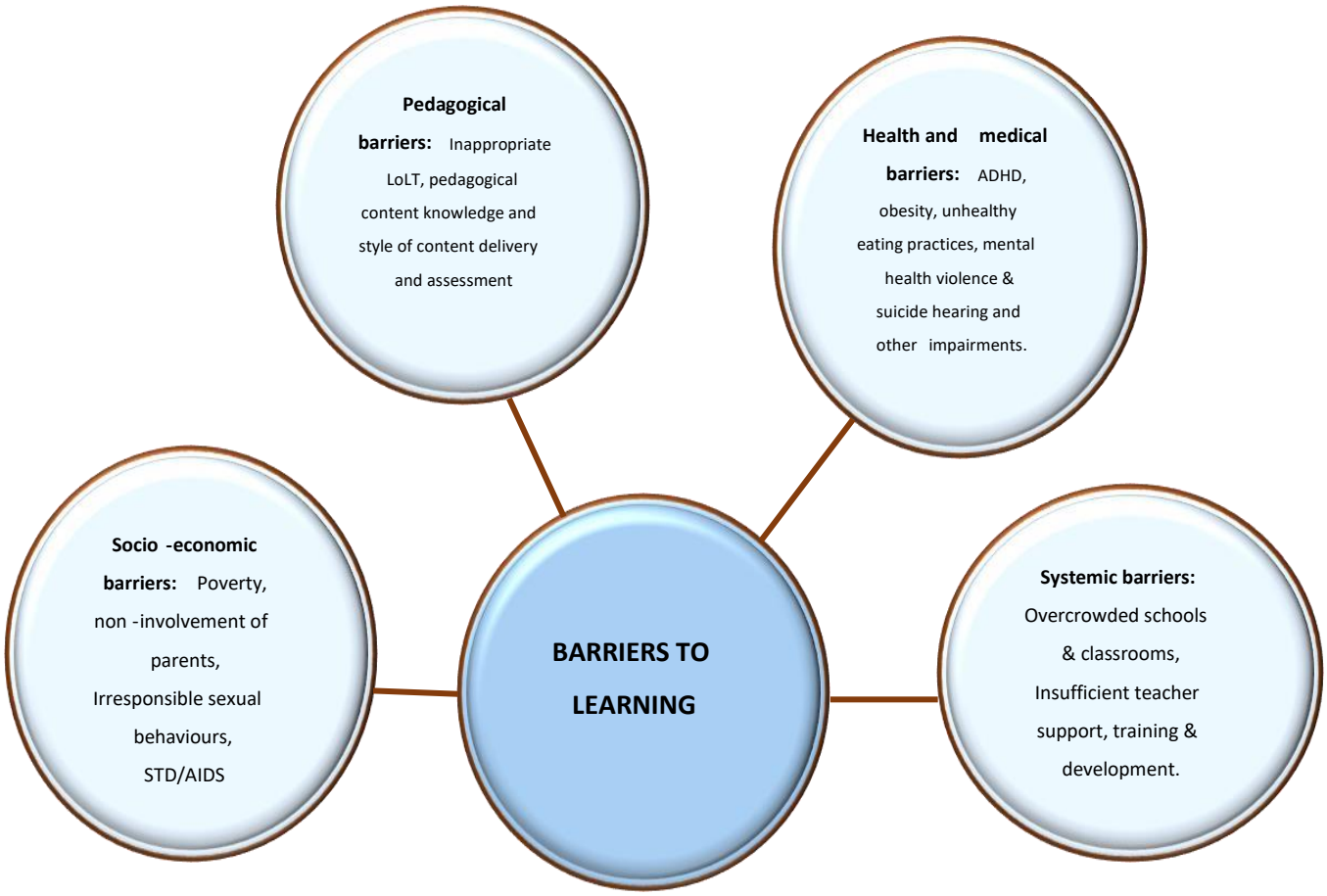
concerned with complying with the curriculum and the annual teaching plan than with building support mechanisms. The practice of sending learners with disabilities to special classrooms is still in use (Walton et al., 2009). Teachers' replies revealed that they did not feel FSSs in South Africa have the resources to meet various learning demands (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). While FSSs have the potential to be examples of inclusion and are a crucial component of inclusive education, many are failing to meet their goals. FSSs' full potential is hampered by a lack of infrastructure, limited support from the DBST, and unfavourable attitudes among teachers, which underscore the need for proper learner support systems (Conway, 2017). The prevalence of barriers to learning necessitates learner support. If FSS functioned correctly, these barriers would be overcome or adequately addressed, and their impact would lessen.

Barriers to learning prevailing in the education system and learners are discussed below.

2.3.3 Barriers to learning in South Africa

Barriers to learning are defined by Nel et al. (2016) as any factors that may cause a failure in the acquisition of knowledge. According to the DBE (2014), they are challenges that obstruct learning and growth; they may exist within the educational system or the learner. Learning barriers may be classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic barriers are those factors that prevail outside the learner but affect the learner's experience (Walton et al., 2009). Extrinsic barriers are often the education system's failure to accommodate learners' diverse needs (DoE, 2001), which precedes a breakdown in learning. Extrinsic barriers, according to Engelbrecht et al. (2006) and Nel et al. (2016), are factors outside a learner's control that impede learning, such as structural, socio-economic, linguistic and pedagogical problems (see Figure 2.3 below). Intrinsic barriers are within the learner, including neurological and developmental impairments, emotional disturbances, and differing intellectual abilities (Walton et al., 2009). Intrinsic barriers exist inside the learner who inhibits successful learning, such as medical or health issues – and in most cases, also outside of a learner's control (Nel et al., 2016).

Learning barriers show themselves in various ways, depending on whether they are inherent to the learner, the school system, or the larger social, economic, and political environment. They become evident when learning breaks down, learners "drop out," or when a learner cannot cope with age-appropriate learning activities (Harmuth, 2012). Learners in inclusive classrooms face a range of learning barriers, as shown in Figure 2.3, and one way of supporting learners is to identify, address and overcome barriers that impede learning (Green, 2021). Such barriers are addressed next.



(Harmuth, 2012, p.107).

Figure 0-4: Barriers to learning

2.3.3.1 Pedagogical barriers

Insufficient teacher support, rigid teaching and assessment methods, the language of teaching and learning, and failure to support learners' chosen learning approach are all examples of pedagogical barriers to learning (Jones & Bender, 2002; Nel et al., 2016). People are different; they are distinct, individual, and dynamic, as are their learning requirements and methods, according to Kruger and Adams (2002). Learners are also individuals, distinct and different from one another in the teaching and learning environment, and they learn differently according to their various learning styles (Skogsberg & Clump, 2003; Visser et al., 2006). Pedagogical barriers to learning occur in the micro-system in the learners' context, directly affecting how teaching and learning happen in the classroom. Kruger and Adams (2002) think that one strategy to overcome pedagogical barriers to learning is for teachers to identify and know learners' unique learning requirements to address them adequately. The other strategy might be for teachers to determine the efficiency of the tactics that teachers currently use and to determine different strategies they

could develop to help themselves become more capable of providing interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention. Other barriers similar to pedagogical barriers are socio-economic barriers.

2.3.3.2 Socio-economic barriers

Socio-economic barriers - like pedagogical barriers - are extrinsic and may hamper teaching and learning to varying degrees and therefore, need to be addressed (Mahlo, 2011; Mnguni, 2017; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Learners from backgrounds characterised by poverty, abuse, crime, and violence may encounter socio-economic challenges and need support so that their learning is not adversely affected by such conditions (Hugo, 2006). If a learner is emotionally, physically or sexually abused, physical and psychological damage may cause recurrent non-attendance from school and "dropout" (Peterson & Hittie, 2003). Other risk factors in the neighbourhood, including violence and crime, may also impede learning (Peterson & Hittie, 2003). According to Stats SA (2020), poverty levels in South Africa have risen since 2006. Therefore, in the next section, I focus on poverty as an example of a socio-economic barrier to learning.

2.3.3.2.1 Poverty as a socio-economic barrier to learning

Poverty, according to Adam Smith, is defined as a lack of not just the most basic requirements of existence but also whatever aspects of the country's culture make it unseemly for individuals, even of the lowest rank, to be without them (Wight, 2007). It is characterised by a persistent shortage of the resources required to maintain an acceptable quality of life (Strauss & Horsten, 2013). It affects educational provision in any community.

According to Venter and Venter (2019), in every culture, a shortage of both human and physical resources impedes learning since resources dictate active learning. Poverty slows a child's intellectual capacity, impairs the child's literateness and cognitive processes, according to Ntshudisane (2014) and Parrett and Budge (2016). Poverty must be regarded as a significant obstacle in the South African environment. About 30.1% of the population is jobless, and 28.5% live on social handouts (Stats SA, 2020). Finally, according to Venter and Venter (2019), if the poverty cycle continues unabated, it will have repercussions for the following generation.

In the bio-ecological theory of development, poverty is in the macro-system. Macrosystems include theoretical and emotional realms and geographical and physical areas (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macro-system's support affects the exo-system, meso-system, and micro-system,

having an indirect but significant impact on the child. Poverty may be temporary or permanent. External causes, such as the current economic downturn, or poor decisions made by parents, such as unwise investments, may cause temporary poverty (Phillips, 2007). Even momentary deprivation has had a significant impact on a child's development. Children in temporary poverty may have emotional and behavioural problems. They may have difficulty with schoolwork and score poorly on academic tests. Such issues usually go away once the family's financial stability is restored. The longer a child is impoverished, the more serious their barriers become (Phillips, 2007). The ministry of education in South Africa has, though, made progress in ensuring that the effects of poverty do not cause an inability to learn by initiating school nutritional programmes around the country (DoE, 2007b). According to its annual report for 2013/14, the initiative touched almost nine million learners (DBE, 2013c).

Another class of barriers that needs the DBE to intervene in addressing are systemic barriers.

2.3.3.3 Systemic barriers

Systemic barriers to learning are imposed by the educational system (Sharma & Loreman, 2013), such as an inflexible curriculum, language and communication issues, inaccessible and unsafe built environment, inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services, etc. The following issues in the educational system may contribute to circumstances that can lead to systemic learning barriers: poor educational infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, a lack of basic learning support materials, a lack of assistive technology, and a paucity of mother tongue teachers (Hugo, 2006). Teachers must also be familiar with the policy concepts outlined in EWP6.

2.3.3.3.1 Inflexible curriculum

One of the primary impediments to learning and development is the curriculum itself, owing to its inflexibility (Booysen, 2018; De Jager, 2013). An inflexible curriculum is incapable of serving the demands of a large range of learners, which can cause learning breakdown and learners' incapacity to access information (Zwane & Malale, 2018). A flexible curriculum allows teachers to adjust to what should be taught to make education more approachable to many learners (Wahl, 2017). Learners are treated as individuals in a flexible teaching and learning approach, giving them more chances to achieve the desired results. This is critical since every learner is unique. According to Nel et al. (2016), these disparities should be accepted and accommodated in learning design, execution, assessment and reporting. According to research by Austin and Starkey (2016), an accommodative curriculum provides additional learning chances for all learners. The necessity of curricular flexibility was highlighted strongly in the NCSNET and NCESS reports. The curriculum at all levels involves various components that support or impede good learning (Du Preez & Simmonds, 2014). The instructional approach, speed, content,

classroom control and organisation, and resources and equipment utilised in learning and teaching are essential parts of the curriculum. The NCSNET and NCESS study advised that the curriculum in South Africa be updated to account for the requirements of all, regardless of their differences, stressing that a curriculum's primary goal should be to maximise learners' potential rather than fixating on a rigid curriculum (DoE, 2001; Du Plessis, 2013). In keeping with the recommendations of the Salamanca conference (UNESCO, 1994), the report also advises against having a curriculum that is just content-based or only skills-based (Booysen, 2018). In addition, appropriate processes should exist to ensure that all learners are encouraged to participate in the teaching and learning process (DoE, 2001; DBE, 2014; UNESCO, 1994). These steps should be made to make the curriculum more flexible rather than inflexible.

2.3.3.3.2 Language and communication

Language permeates all learning (Nel & Nel, 2019), and if used correctly, it empowers learners to free their potential, participate effectively in education and play a meaningful role in society. However, many learners in South Africa do not learn in their mother language and, therefore, become less creative, less spontaneous and lack self-confidence (Nel & Nel, 2019; Sharma & Loreman, 2013). When children start school in South Africa as non-English speakers, the policy says they may study in their native language during the Foundation Phase (Alexander, 2013). However, beginning in Grade 4, learners must shift from being taught in their native language to being taught in English (Latchman, 2014). This shift is being made to prepare for Grade 12 and the children's final examinations, usually in English (Steyn, 2017). The transition should not be a barrier; it is an ecological transformation affected by the school, government, family, and larger community (Phatudi, 2014). Changes are not just contextual but also important interims in which learners confront new and challenging tasks as they shift from familiar to unfamiliar and more complicated environments. Teachers must provide long-term assistance to learners acclimatise to the shift (Maodi, 2018). Ineffective transitioning leads to a loss of time; learners spend learning time adjusting to the new learning environment and its expectations. A poorly handled transition might negatively affect the learning process, leading to long-lasting learning issues and sub-par academic achievement. Phatudi (2014) posits that teachers feel that the government should establish transition strategies.

2.3.3.3.3 Inaccessible and unsafe buildings

The overwhelming majority of institutions are impossible to access by a significant proportion of learners, teachers, and communities with disabilities who use wheelchairs or other mobility equipment (Harmuth, 2012).

Up to this point, extrinsic barriers were described. In some instances, learners are hampered by intrinsic factors to learn effectively, such as medical and health barriers, as described in the next section.

2.3.3.4 Medical and health barriers

Medical barriers are motor and perceptual disorders, chronic illnesses and other health impairments threatening academic success (Nel et al., 2016) (see Figure 2.4). According to Hugo (2006), medical and health barriers include sensory impairments such as communication disorders, academic learning difficulties, mental health issues, and attention distractibility problems. Such difficulty may be shown in restricted listening, reading, writing, thought or arithmetic (Kokot, 2006). Cognitive and intellectual impairments are also part of the medical obstacles which have a detrimental impact on education and learning (Jooste & Jooste, 2019). In the Bronfenbrenner bio-ecological PPCT model, medical and health barriers form part of the resource characteristics of a person. Resource characteristics determine whether or not a person can effectively interact throughout the proximal interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Smit et al., 2020). Proximal interactions influence human development, resulting in the individual's psychological, physical, social, biological and/or cultural development in systemic settings, in addition to being the force that originates and maintains human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Unresolved medical and health barriers can impair proximal interactions, impeding the growth and development of a learner (World Health Organisation, 2012). Barriers to learning must be addressed adequately if the ideals of inclusive education, as published in EWP6, are to be realised. According to the ministry of education, the solution to removing barriers to learning in education has improved education support services (DoE, 2001).

The role of ESS in learning support is discussed next.

2.4 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES (ESS) IN LEARNING SUPPORT

Hay and Joubert (2021) describe ESS as all psychosocial, educational support services provided by provincial education departments to the country's institutions and role players. The ESS comprises structures such as the DBST and SBST, within all institutions across nine provinces, including learning support teachers (LSEs) at schools or facilitators at the district level (DBE, 2014; DoE, 2001).

The ESS tries to help ensure that an inclusive education system succeeds and is effective (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018). These institutions have been formed in South Africa to drive inclusive education (Bouillet, 2013). The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2009) emphasises that education support structures influencing inclusive education are broad and include a variety of service providers coordinated across several sectors. In South

Africa, not all schools can be reached by the DBE. It has been a national requirement for all schools to form SBSTs and districts to establish DBSTs. The DoE would depend on these structures to offer high-quality education in all schools since a stronger education support service is the key to lowering obstacles to learning in all educational institutions. When education support is well-implemented, it leads to effective learner support, which fosters strong self-efficacy in learners and lets them reach their full academic potential (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to explore the role of SBSTs and their capacity to support learners with barriers.

2.4.1 The School-Based Support Teams

According to Landsberg and Matthews (2019), every school should have a significant presence of the SBST, which the Learning Support Educator (LSE) (if present) - the facilitator, should take the lead in establishing. This team was identified by Nel et al. (2016) as the primary level of assistance for teachers and learners in a school. According to DBE (2014) and Nel et al. (2016), the SBST is the teachers' and learners' first level of support. Makhalemele (2011) argues that any school interested in establishing an SBST must be clear about the community they serve. Who is in charge of recommending the team? Who should be in charge of the team's coordination? What is the best way for the team to work together? Clarification of duties is an integral part of establishing SBSTs. Establishing an SBST requires clear and extensive stakeholder discussions (DBE, 2014). One of the facilitator's difficulties will be getting acquainted with the parents, community of teachers and learners who will form part of the support team to be established. Teachers may have difficulty executing their duties in the SBSTs; thus, the facilitator should keep that in mind. Individualised teacher empowerment will be required. Therefore, in-service training should be provided to team members once selected at the school level by the DBST (DoE, 2005). Throughout this training, teams should develop the skills and abilities to grasp SBSTs and small group collaborative work (DoE, 2005, 2010). Ntseto (2015) believes that it is essential for the SBST to know how to accurately describe, analyse, and think about the needs and problems of the learners referred to them. They also need to understand how to communicate with other stakeholders when they interview them, choose and define realistic intervention goals, hold problem-solution meetings, come up with ideas fin terms of brainstorming to solve problems and figure out how to teach teachers at their schools about learner support. The writer further asserts that teachers may be sceptical and critical during the first stages of implementation until they grasp the significance of cooperation and teamwork (Ntseto, 2015).

The functions of the SBST, therefore, must be communicated to all role players.

2.4.1.1 Functions of the SBST

The functions of the SBST, according to DoE (2001) and DoE (2005), are as follows:

- Recognise and eliminate obstacles that learners, teachers, and the whole school are confronted with, and correctly organise learner and teacher support services to make the learning and teaching process more efficient. This may include connecting the support personnel to other management structures within the school and procedures or combining them to make collaboration easier and minimise duplication. These groups must then collaborate to develop methods to overcome the obstacles identified (Dreyer, 2015).

- When accepting learners with barriers to learning, the SBST should play a role. Here, it would be the team's duty to see that any new admissions given to them by the admissions committee are evaluated in the spirit of inclusiveness before being accepted (DoE, 2006b) to decide which class the child will be enrolled in and to plan support measures to be put into place with the teacher's help.

- To train teachers on how to meet the requirements of learners having difficulty learning; and to notify the DBST of any extra training materials, equipment, or other intervention requirement (DoE, 2006b).

- To ascertain learners' and teachers' support requirements and coordinate their provision within the scope of the SIAS at the school level (DBE, 2014).

- To assist teachers in managing inclusive classrooms where learners present with various barriers to learning (Masango, 2013).

- The SBSTs arrange regular in-service teacher training opportunities (DoE, 2005). Good in-service training will enhance teachers' skills and knowledge regarding learner support and intervention (Swart & Pettipher, 2019).

Adequate learning support is critical to good everyday teaching (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016); thus, an operational and effective SBST must be in place to meet the needs of both teachers and learners (Makoelle, 2014; Nel et al., 2016). A detailed account of the functions of the SBST in policy documents that promote the establishment of the SBSTs (Landsberg & Matthews, 2019), but these policies are probably not specific enough about the composition of the SBST, which negatively affects the provision of support to the schools. Even though it is not legislated who should form part of the SBST, it is proposed in the NCSNET/NCESS report that parents and teachers should be included as part of the team. It has been proposed further that staff members

and, preferably, the SBST should include a member who has further training in one of the specialised competence areas identified in the NCSNET/NCESS study and evolving policy (such as learner support, counselling, or life skills education).

2.4.1.2 The composition of the SBST

According to DoE (2005), the following are the responsibilities of different members of the SBST:

2.4.1.2.1 The Principal

The South African Schools Act defines the principal's general duties in school management. According to the DoE (2006b), he/she should verify the school's implementation of all policies. Thus, the principal's efforts and coordination are crucial to the vital success of assistance supplied to learners, teachers, and parents. The following are the principal's responsibilities stipulated regarding ESS (DoE, 2006b); (1) Promote inclusive education policies and practices by maintaining linkages with the DBST and ensuring the SBST is operational; (2) Publicising to the school, staff, pupils, and parents information on policies for inclusive education and procedures written as well as accepted by the School Management Team (SMT), the School Governing Body (SGB), and the SBST; (3) Assuring that school rules, such as admission policies, follow the school's broader inclusive education policy; (4) Assuring the evaluation and the identification of learners encountering difficulties as well as their intervention, are carried out following the processes established in the relevant school policies and the national inclusive education policy; (5) Collaborating with the SBST, parents/guardians, and the School Governing Body to make it easier for children with learning disabilities to be accommodated; 6) Making sure inclusive education is practiced with consideration to the diversity among learners and without excluding brilliant learners; and, (7) confirming that all learning variety is considered and making sure that parents/guardians with their children remain engaged and learning at all levels of the process of support.

2.4.1.2.2 The coordinator

This job is often performed by an LSE according to Landsberg and Matthews (2019). In other schools, this position is filled by a teacher chosen by the staff or recommended by the principal - the principal tasks this teacher with coordinating the SBST and convening meetings. The DoE (2006a) emphasises the need for the SBST coordinator to be an expert in dealing with obstacles to learning or dedicated to gaining this competence and arranging for good SBST meeting chairing and record keeping. The coordinator's responsibilities include organising the SBST and the Teacher Assistance Team (TAT), scheduling meetings, managing case referral files, allocating case priority, conferring with the referring teachers, and documenting suggestions, including actions taken to make sure that follow-up measures are always implemented.

2.4.1.2.3 The Referring teacher

The teacher who makes the referral has recognised a need for support and is seeking assistance from the SBST in addressing the support. He/she should stay a team member until the issues are adequately resolved. This teacher's primary responsibility is to update the SBST on the current situation and give recommendations (DBE, 2014). According to the DoE (2006a), the recommending teacher should avoid abdicating full responsibility to the SBST and instead change teaching tactics, speak with parents, watch the learner, and discuss with other teachers informally. Although information on the recommended pupil should be supplied, it is anticipated that the observation record and the techniques undertaken will be retained in the learner profile. The SBST will utilise this information.

2.4.1.2.4 The Teachers Assistance Team (TAT)

The Teachers Assistance Team forms part of the SBST and is responsible for moral and academic support provided by subject or learning area teachers. The TAT members are urged to be devoted to removing educational obstacles since their acts bolster the SBST. This team's primary responsibilities are to provide didactic help or promote re-teaching to address the requirements of learners. The TAT shall report to the SBST coordinator with information about the detected concerns. Additionally, the team is adaptable in its approach to problem-solving; for example, if the issue concerns parent engagement, the team must include parents in the problem-solving endeavour. One may believe that the team members should get along with the referring teacher and that everyone on the team should respect the confidentiality of all discussions (DoE, 2006a).

2.4.1.2.5 Teachers skilled in providing learning support

An SBST requires that teachers who are part of the team possess various learning support abilities, including that of guidance, life skills, special education, and counselling. Such teachers must demonstrate extensive expertise in addressing the school's and the learners' requirements. The teacher(s) must be capable of the following:

- describe any educational technique that will be more appropriate for learners with physical or mental conditions than traditional methods of teaching;
- construct a plan of action with a realistic possibility of recovering the educational achievement of learners whose development has been slowed by ecological circumstances;
- determine a scope and its severity of all issues faced by pupils, and if they are un(der)developed in all or simply certain areas;

- examine the reasons for the difficulties by looking at the child's history as documented in the learner profile in terms of things like family life, school attendance, health and overall aptitude, and draw up an ISP that aims to stop the circumstances that led to the learner's poor development - from having any more of an impact while simultaneously offering activities to increase the abilities they lack;

- provide learners with the tools they need for effective life and learning; provide learners with crucial skills that facilitate life, grow their chances of achieving their potential and participating actively in the community; and give them the basic skills for successful life and learning;

- assist pupils in transforming their knowing - their attitudes and/or beliefs - to practical skills;

- impart information to learners about how to avoid and overcome life's troubles and obstacles; and

- advise, comfort or direct learners to alleviate or overcome challenges, and provide counselling for staff.

2.4.1.3 Parents' role in the SBST

Parents in South Africa are prominent in their children's education. Learner support policies encourage and ensure that parents' opinions are considered in support of learners (DoE, 2001) and/or that parents join founded social movements. Even though rules promote a high degree of parental participation, the existing scenario is not optimal (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; McMahon, 2010). Many teachers lament the absence of parental participation in their kids' academic activities. Since they are also members of these committees, the SBSTs confront the significant task of attracting parental involvement to school. Parents' role as principal caregivers is important since parents form part of the micro-environment of a developing child. Children interact daily, and the experiences parents have with their children can help inform the SBST about the child's physical, emotional, and academic health (McConkey, 2003). The SBST must see the parent(s)/guardian(s) as a vital basis of knowledge and/or assistance (DBE, 2014). To prevent a situation where parents may feel that their children are being undervalued or overvalued by the teacher or are overly anxious to live up to the perceived high expectations of the parents because they have not agreed on what is expected, the SBST must use parents to learn about learners' capabilities. Jeynes (2011) mentions that parents are knowledgeable about their child's health, particularly if the child has a specific handicap or chronic disease, and may share that information with a group of professionals or organisations that provide support and expert guidance.

2.4.1.4 Children as Learners

Learners can also qualify to be members of the SBST but are often disregarded as a component of the support system. It must be recognised that they can make a tremendous impact. According to the DoE (2006a), their tasks in the team may be to provide peer assistance to learners suffering from mobility or sensory challenges at school. In addition, these learners (as peers) could recognise and direct the needs of other learners to the team. The peers might sometimes give account if they recognise their peers or even pupils from other classes going through a tough time. These SBST learners can help other learners due to the experience they have gained.

2.4.1.5 The role of the SBST in learning support

The SBST plays a critical role in transforming schooling and learning for the better. According to several sources of literature (DoE, 2006a, 2006b), the SBST is the foundation of support and help for teachers toward addressing learning difficulties. Its primary role is to aid the entire school community in understanding what it takes to create a school that prioritises its learners and to effectively address learner support. Given that there may be obstacles to learning and growth at various system levels, the SBST should operate as part of an ecosystem rather than focusing on individual learners and look for methods to reduce these obstacles within the school setting (DoE, 2006b). According to the EWP6 (DoE, 2001), the SBST's job is to supervise and support all work that increases the school’s support. Thus, competent managing should make learner support applications simpler. It will also be reflected in the quality of instruction and learning in the classroom, the level of attention and esteem visible in interactions within the school, and teachers' desires and confidence to reflect on themselves and be open to improvement.

The SBST's involvement in learning support includes, but is not limited to, classroom adaptation, curriculum adaptation, differentiated curriculum material, differentiated assessment, supporting learners with varied emotional needs, creating SBST networks, and teacher professional development.

2.4.1.5.1 Classroom adaptation

The SBST ensures that classrooms are safe and within reach of all learners (DoE, 2001) and are modified to accommodate learners with learning needs. For instance, if a child/learner is a wheelchair user, the classroom must have adequate space. There must be wheelchair-accessible ramps. Traditional schools must also be equipped to accommodate learners with physical, visual, and auditory impairments. Because these learners must be included, modifications must be made to accommodate them at school and in the classroom. To ensure that the school is appropriately adapted, the SBST may work with disability-related organisations and invite them to the school to inspect the physical modifications and communicate with teachers on the educational and

emotional requirements of learners with learning difficulties. The primary aim of such classroom modifications is to ensure that all learners participate. Second, imagine that learners who face problems may see teachers and the school community working hard to integrate them into the educational system. In this scenario, they shall be provided with a mental boost that makes them feel included. This would give an excellent source of inspiration for any learner who experiences barriers to learning (DoE, 2006).

Changes regarding curriculum adaptation may also be made to assist learners with intellectual challenges in learning.

2.4.1.5.2 Curriculum adaptation

The SBST should assist in aiding learners who face learning barriers. The SBST may exchange ideas with teachers on altering classes and establishing a learning environment that benefits all. A learning environment impacts effective learning. It is also proven that learning is more efficient when learners feel comfortable and supported. The curriculum is another element that requires consideration. Teachers must first evaluate the varied learning requirements of the learners in their classes, according to the DoE (2006b); then, they may differentiate and adjust the curriculum. The significance of this is that they will rapidly realise that most learners (and not only learners with barriers) have various needs to be fulfilled in learning. Since there is enormous diversity within a class, various activities should be provided in the lesson to suit different learning styles (Ojageer, 2019). By assisting teachers in creating learner profiles and gaining a deeper understanding of their learners, the SBST may also play a crucial role. The SBST should help teachers plan their support strategies as they go through the working phase of reaching learning objectives. Additionally, the SBST is to be part of developing an ISP catering to the individual learning needs of learners.

The individual support plan in DoE (2005) is described in the Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes: This plan will be tailored to learners who need more assistance or opportunity. An ISP will be prepared with parents, teachers, and the SBST (DBE, 2014). An ISP should not be fixed but instead evaluated regularly for application and efficacy. It should improve all learners' engagement in every class activity while considering any issues that may obstruct their social, emotional and academic development. This plan must be recorded in the learners' profiles and guide the continuing help from teachers and other support personnel. A strategy like this should never be turned into a stand-alone programme that operates separately from the curricular framework preparation the teacher conducts for all learners (DoE, 2005). Regular work schedules must be altered to make room for learners with learning barriers. The SBST must guide teachers in compiling work schedules and learning programmes as well as additional information in enhancing the participation and inclusion of all learners. The DoE (2006a) stated these truths

were crucial when adapting work schedules for learner support: Learners might continue with those results and assessment standards to the following grade, and work schedules need not be rigorously followed within one academic year. Teachers must develop the assessment criteria into achievable phases while planning a work schedule. Teachers need not compile learning programmes and work schedules because CAPS comes complete with lesson plans and work programmes; they do, though, still consider the suitability thereof for learners with barriers. When the lesson content is differentiated, the SBST must inspire teachers to collaborate on lesson planning and exchange ideas for differentiating the curriculum content. If teachers find it difficult to differentiate curricular content, one qualified and experienced SBST member should be asked for assistance.

2.4.1.5.3 Content differentiation in the curriculum

Differentiation of content is curriculum alterations or adaptations to accommodate the various learning demands of the learners in the classroom. It is an approach that teachers may employ to ensure that all learners have effective learning experiences. Differentiation considers learner variations and tailors curriculum material, instructional techniques, and assessment procedures to individual learners' learning styles, needs and characteristics. It may be oriented on an input, a task, an output, a response, resources, or support (UNESCO, 2004). Shaw (2013) asserts that curriculum differentiation enables all learners to approach the same topic uniquely while meeting the curricular objectives. Therefore, curriculum differentiation necessitates removing all impediments to learning, aligning with the United Nations' SDG4 goal of delivering inclusive, high-quality, inclusive education (UNESCO, 2016), irrespective of who they are or what they are capable of or not. Hence, teachers must apply flexibility by using various teaching and learning techniques to increase learners' chances of reaching learning objectives. The DBE cites curriculum differentiation as one option to provide a flexible curriculum within an inclusive educational system (DBE, 2011a). When creating and implementing lessons, assessment strategies, and methodologies and differentiation enable teachers to consider all learners' learning requirements and learning styles (DBE, 2011a; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000). Curriculum differentiation is described as tailoring the curriculum to fit the educational requirements of all learners in the Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning. It is firmly anchored in the principles of flexibility, primarily emphasising learning, teaching and assessment (DBE, 2010a). When designing a lesson, differentiation involves thoughtful consideration of adjusting and altering the learning objectives and the evaluation strategies and processes (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000; UNESCO, 2004).

Teachers and the SBST may investigate the following concepts for differentiating curricular material, according to the Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes (DBE, 2010a):

- Remember that learners with varying backgrounds may react differently to given material. Learners in a classroom are diverse in various ways. They may benefit from learning from others whose ideas, views, attitudes, values, backgrounds, experiences and actions are unlike their own (Bennett, 2015).

- Even if some learners do not have a complete command of English, they may grasp the essential principles.

- It is conceivable that some learners may not be interested in the material, which will influence their behaviour throughout the exercise. Thus, abstract content and length of tasks may be minimised.

- Create a new task with comparable scope and demand. Learners ready for a more complicated task may be given challenging tasks.

- Provide learners with reading materials that are both interesting and not very challenging to read linguistically.

- Utilise another scheduled activity to evaluate more outcomes or features of the results than initially anticipated.

In certain instances, a teacher from another class or grade may have considerable experience, and it is the SBST's job to engage such employees to contribute ideas (Mphahlele, 2005). Additionally, for learners with problems, the SBST must play a crucial role in changing teaching methods and instructional materials. The SBST must offer a platform for teachers to deliberate and exchange educational and instructional resources (Masango, 2013). The team is supposed to advise teachers that materials must be culturally, developmentally, and age-appropriate. At several South African schools, teachers regard low resources as an issue, and it may take time for supplies to become easily accessible (Mkhuma, 2012; Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). Nonetheless, it cannot be an explanation or justification for the low-quality instruction of learners (DBE, 2014). Teachers should be able to include all learners in their courses by using accessible resources (Ojageer, 2019).

Besides curriculum differentiation, the other vital component, as explained in the SIAS policy, is differentiated assessment (Hlalele et al., 2020). The DBE (2014) states that assessment needs to be adapted to allow learners to access the curriculum and assessments at the level most appropriate for their needs.

2.4.1.5.4 Differentiated assessment

According to the DoE (2006a), evaluation may be customised to meet the requirements of individual learners by differentiating based on the assistance required. The following must be recognised: different barriers will need different evaluation techniques; a barrier may require more than one opportunity, and some learners may encounter many obstacles. The SBST can first ask someone from a disabled-serving organisation to discuss learners' assessment requirements with unique challenges regarding inclusive assessment techniques. Second, a representative from the DBST might be asked to speak on assessment strategies.

2.4.1.5.5 Supporting learners who present challenging behaviour

DoE (2006a) states that most learners have a range of emotional needs. Emotional growth is influenced by social experiences and the cultural environment (Steyn, 2011). Teachers must consider their learners' emotional development, conditions, and academic responsibilities. Some learners may exhibit problematic behaviour because of unmet emotional demands. Challenging behaviour is defined as behaviour that disrupts learning (Venter, 2019). Factors, such as socio-economic barriers, language and communication and physical problems may lead to challenging behaviour in some learners (Venter, 2019). Challenging behaviour may take many forms, including smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, mental health, violence and suicide.

- **Smoking, alcohol and drug abuse**

Some of the challenging behavioural traits presented by learners, such as deviant behaviour, sad mood, and impaired ego integration, result from alcohol and drug abuse (Boisvert et al, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2012). These behavioural qualities are also connected to lower standards for educational performance, which may show as suspension, dropping out, or a lack of attention to school, according to Morojele et al. (2016). Literature shows that school dropout is a big problem in South Africa (Boisvert et al., 2013; Nguyen et al., 2012), with the nation ranking among the countries with the most number of dropouts due to causes such as a lack of stimulation and support, among others (Morojele et al., 2016). Smoking, abusing drugs and alcohol are all impediments to learning; the SIAS should screen, identify, evaluate, and assist all learners with development and learning challenges in their education, including learners who smoke, drink, or misuse drugs (DBE, 2013a). The SBSTs and school principals must ensure that all learners learn about alcohol and drug use in the life orientation learning area. Those co-curricular activities accompany these lessons. The SBST must work with Non-Governmental Organisations and community-based organisations to ensure these programmes are implemented (DBE, 2013a).

- **Suicide, mental health, and violence**

Mental health, violence and suicide also form part of the challenges of the education system. It is reported that suicide accounts for up to 9.5% of all teen deaths in South Africa (Konco, 2021). Suicide is the second leading and fastest-growing cause of death among people aged 10 to 19. One-third of teenagers have attempted suicide and require social and emotional support. School violence has also been making headlines again this year after a scholar at Limpopo committed suicide due to bullying at school (Tshikalange, 2021). School violence is commonly defined as any violent behaviour committed on the grounds, while commuting to or from school, or attending a school-related event. There are physical and non-physical forms of violence in schools, exacerbating physical or emotional harm to the victim and severely obstructing the regular educational system (Leoschut & Makota, 2016). Kreifels and Warton (2021) argue that addressing school violence is essential: It violates children's and teachers' rights, has a damaging effect on teachers' and learners' ability to learn, and harms the societies around it. School violence negatively affects the country's growth objectives and has extensive health and economic costs for the government (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). It is crucial to consider the actual incidences of crime and violence, the dread of such events, and their impact on learner and teacher well-being when addressing school violence. Woolf et al. (2015) propose that mental health professionals, teachers and parents in South African schools need to work together to prevent suicide, and they need better training and supervision. Shilubane et al. (2015) agree that teachers should know suicidal behaviour to help prevent adolescent suicide. Still, they need to know how to support peers and the school after a suicide attempt. The SBST may assist in creating a safe schooling environment.

However, many SBSTs in many schools face challenges that make it difficult to operate optimally (Hlalele et al., 2020).

2.4.1.6 Challenges experienced by SBSTs

The next debate demonstrates that although most schools have established SBSTs, these teams are ineffective. In South Africa, school-based support confronts various problems in assisting vulnerable learners. Makhalemele and Tlale (2021), for example, discovered that the team coordinator's incapacity hampered SBSTs from arranging meetings in a study examining the obstacles encountered by SBSTs. Mphahlele (2005) found that the team did not meet and that information gained at DBST-organised seminars/workshops was not communicated with co-workers. Additionally, the teachers in Foundation Phase lacked faith in the SBST. Tebid (2017) discovered that meetings were seldom conducted, and participants were not collaborating to find the best feasible solution to overcome learning hurdles.

Another challenge that Makoelle (2014) discovered is that insufficient school-based assistance resulted from SBST members' failure to coordinate as needed. Without thoroughly analysing solutions to evaluate their applicability in their settings and cultures, they attempted to adopt support methods they had acquired from somewhere. In another study by Mphahlele (2005), collaboration was cited as lacking. The SBST was not working with the Foundation Phase teachers at this time for the best intervention, yet the SBST's functioning may be greatly enhanced by the school community's practitioners' effective cooperation in addressing the various requirements of learners and teachers, according to Motitswe (2014). Not only are irregular, mismanaged meetings and lack of collaboration challenging SBST, but there is also a lack of skill to perform their duties. Rulwa-Mnatwana (2014) discovered that members of SBSTs felt underprepared for implementing inclusive education, that another obstacle was the language of instruction and learning, that teachers needed psychological care, and that they faced impractical workloads and resource constraints. Motitswe (2014) asserts that rather than utilising the SBST platform as a collaborative forum with other teachers at the school, some members believe they are accountable for offering all advice to assist the teaching and learning processes outlined in EWP6. Some team members did not openly share their knowledge or convey their abilities, while others lacked the skills to accomplish their assigned responsibilities. The SBST members were also not completely and evenly used within and by the team (Rulwa-Mnatwana, 2014).

Several SBST members thought the paperwork was cumbersome and reduced the team's effectiveness. Learner support is negatively affected because most teachers lack the knowledge and/or skills to differentiate the prescribed curriculum to accommodate various learning requirements (Dalton et al., 2012). The legacy of inequitable education in South Africa, an inflexible curriculum, the practice of separating learners at risk of poor developmental outcomes from the rest, and the challenge schools face in assisting students affected by socio-economic risks were all mentioned by Donohue and Bornman (2014). These make SBSTs less effective.

According to Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018), the district did not provide the Foundation Phase teachers at the school they researched with enough assistance, particularly regarding several curriculum-related difficulties. It was noted, too, that the district officer seemed confounded. A lack of DBST support might jeopardise the objective of ensuring high-quality education available to all learners/pupils. Certain SBSTs get little assistance from the DBSTs (Hlalele et al., 2020; Motitswe, 2014). Matlala (2015) affirmed this remark, stating that SBSTs struggle to acquire necessary assistance from stakeholders such as parents, other departmental bodies, and the DBST. SBSTs are constrained by a severe scarcity of professionals qualified to serve in DBSTs. Other problems include little parental involvement in school issues, substantial teacher assignments, insufficient teacher training, multi-grade teaching, and minimum resources to

support learners at risk of schooling (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Heeralal & Jama, 2014). These make SBSTs less effective.

Although the discussion above may appear like the tasks and challenges of the SBST are insurmountable, Makhalemele (2011) posits there are benefits to being part of the SBST. Some benefits are: (1) Each team member learns to help another by avoiding keeping important information unknown; (2) All resources, particular abilities, and talents are shared rather than being kept to oneself; (3) Teamwork helps individuals avoid or reveal dangers that might otherwise be missed if they worked alone and made higher-quality decisions; (4) When individuals work together, their morale improves, achieving more success; (5) Everyone works for the team's success.

If success is not realised, The DBST should be invited to assist the SBST.

2.4.2 The role of the District-Based Support Teams (DBST) in learner support

The DBST aims to detect and address learning barriers to help establish successful teaching and learning (DoE, 2005), and these teams comprise professionals who are specialists in their respective fields, including professionals employed in special schools (Johnson & Green, 2009; Muthukrishna, 2008). A list of professionals that form part of the DBST is as follows:

- **Support personnel**

This group includes LSEs, psychologists, therapists, specialists on particular impairments, and other professionals who work at the DoE (now DBE). They are required to integrate their specialised expertise and use collaborative problem-solving techniques (Johnson & Green, 2009).

- **Curriculum experts**

Curriculum experts collaborate with classroom teachers to develop lessons, analyse learner performance, model teaching, encourage differentiation, and much more based on their expertise and effectiveness in the classroom (Jacobs, 2015). Although the function varies significantly from school to school and district to district, there are several universal elements of the role. Since the curriculum specialist is also a leader of development, they will need abilities beyond classroom teachers to adequately fulfil the job's obligations (Brouse, 2020). Curriculum experts may assist teachers with their lessons. According to EWP6, these teams assist with curriculum, assessment and teaching (DoE, 2001, 2006a).

- **Management specialists**

Schools must be provided with management guidelines by management professionals. Power dynamics at schools are prevalent; the DBSTs will provide school administrators with alternative techniques and tactics for addressing difficulties, effective manager functioning, and continuous management training.

- **Administrative experts**

The members of the DBST are in charge of helping schools with financial and administrative management.

- **Other government professionals**

Representatives from local government departments make up this group. Other government professionals' involvement in education aid, according to Muthukrishna (2008), is an example of interdisciplinary cooperation. The engagement of these different government officials is contingent on the school district's individual needs and the district's resources. According to Johnson and Green (2009), excellent intersectoral coordination between educational structures and other government organisations would guarantee that DBSTs and SBSTs are administered efficiently.

2.4.2.1 Functions and roles of DBSTs

The DBST needs to be a flexible team that can adapt to the requirements of the schools and learners, but everyone on the team ought to be equipped to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them. Although DoE (2005) lists the composition and the core functions of the DBST (Table 2.1), the challenges experienced by the referred learner determine which of the team members should be involved in a particular case based on the expertise required (Lazarus et al., 2008). The core functions of the DBST are discussed hereafter and summarised in Table 2.1 below.

Table 0-1: The core functions of the DBST

Support Structure	Description
Classroom-based support	• Providing LSEs with continual training and support as well as direct learning assistance to students with exceptional needs. • Make certain that all curricular components meet various learner demands. • Avail appropriate equipment and LTSM for all learners to help them learn.
	• Train teachers and other members of staff to improve learning support.

Organisational support	• Encourage parents to get involved in governance matters and play an active role in their children's education. • Training and supporting people who work in governance and management structures. • Support institutions by helping them with vision building, policy making, conflict resolution, and so on, and conflict management between school community members.
Administrative support	• The South African Schools Act states that administrators must be trained to use information technology and execute financial responsibilities. • Training and support for human resource managers.
Addressing social and context-related issues	• Addressing several physical health, emotional and psychological, techniques to address concerns or enhance learners' and staff' health and well-being at schools and educational institutions.

(DoE, 2005, p.3-4)

The DBSTs are crucial to service delivery because they assess learners and, through supportive interactions, increase schools' capacity to identify and address serious learning issues and meet various learning requirements (DoE, 2001, 2006a; Johnson & Green, 2009). The key goals and duties of the DBSTs are listed in the national educational policies:

- Assist teachers in making teaching and assessment techniques more flexible (DoE, 2001; 2005).

- Support the system and all learners and teachers to meet a broad range of learning demands through developing pedagogical practices beneficial to all learners (DoE, 2001, 2005, 2006a).

- Evaluate programmes, discover how well they work, and suggest changes. Help early childhood development centres, schools, universities, and adult basic education and training facilities identify and treat severe learning problems and accommodate different learning demands (DoE, 2001, 2005, 2006a).

- Provide direct intervention to learners in different contexts and act as consultants and advisers to school administrators, governing bodies and teachers.

- Facilitate in-service training for teachers to upgrade their skills and increase their capacity to support learners with barriers while providing a structure for learning support at the district and institutional levels.

To achieve these goals and ensure successful teaching and learning in schools, it will be necessary for the team to carry out specific responsibilities, such as providing learners with direct learning help when necessary and practical, to identify and overcome barriers. DBST intervention directed to the learner should be available when SBSTs cannot respond to certain learning

demands (DBE, 2014). This position supports Makhalemele's (2011) view of the challenge of implementing the DBSTs new function, in which members of the DBST are given the option of providing direct support to learners. The challenge of implementing the DBSTs new function is that policies do not clearly define the degree of one-on-one assistance that must be offered. Still, the severity of the situation may not be seen in the same way by all DBST members (Makhalemele, 2011). However, unless this challenge and others described below are addressed, implementing the new responsibilities of the DBSTs may be hampered (Maluleke, 2015; Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007; Zungu, 2014). Below are some challenges experienced by the DBSTs.

2.4.2.2 The challenges experienced by DBSTs

Makhalemele (2011) and Makhalemele and Tlale (2021) found that even though DBST members have accepted their responsibilities, these have shifted over time, including providing school resources, evaluating programmes, and suggesting changes; and the members of the DBST still struggle to fulfil their new responsibilities. DBE (2013b) asserts unequivocally that DBSTs are critical for school achievement and ensuring that high-quality education is available to all learners. Still, a lack of collaboration in the functioning of the DBST is a primary challenge among other factors and is looked at next.

2.4.2.2.1 Lack of collaboration

District offices must collaborate with principals and other key stakeholders to expand educational access and retention, provide administrative and professional support, and help schools achieve excellence in learning and teaching (DBE, 2013b). Collaboration in education refers to voluntary social interaction among professionals to learn from one another by planning together, identifying their interaction goals, and equally distributing roles based on individual strengths to generate creative solutions to problems (Richards et al., 2016). The accountability for the collaborative process's outputs is shared throughout the process. According to Nel et al. (2016), working with colleagues both within and outside the school improves learner performance. Collaboration can reduce stress and enhance teacher confidence, yielding supportive and therapeutic benefits (Fodo, 2020). It inspires enthusiasm for altering practice as partners to exchange knowledge and produces feedback from colleagues. This helps with the production of new ideas and problem-solving (Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016; Steyn, 2017).

2.4.2.2.2 A lack of coordination between educational psychologists and instructors

Due to the insufficient number of educational psychologists who have to service schools, there needs to be a shift from the direct, curative service delivery to a more socio-ecological approach. This implies that educational psychologists' specific understanding, abilities, and practice should be aimed toward individuals and offer holistic health-promoting, developmental, and preventive

measures to schools and communities (Engelbrecht, 2006). The educational psychology symposium at the 2007 Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) conference corroborated this viewpoint. Several practitioners expressed worry about the country's supply of school psychological services (Mills, 2011). While acknowledging the need for customised evaluation and intervention, it was suggested that there is an urgent need to reconsider the function of educational psychologists in the educational system. Thus, educational psychologists are collaborative consultants who share skills and experience with teachers, parents, other professionals, and key stakeholders (DoE, 2001). Collaborative schools that prioritise curriculum, instructional decision-making, and identifying and meeting the needs of their learners are more likely to see improved academic outcomes and more engaged learners with positive attitudes towards school (Haines et al., 2015; Hall & Wurf, 2018).

Learners with a positive attitude towards school are not likely to drop out or to be suspended, attend school frequently, have improved self-confidence, produce better-quality work and have better family relationships (Haines et al., 2015; Steyn, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Haines et al. (2015) state that learners who see school positively usually have a good school attendance record are unlikely to drop out or be suspended, have reduced misbehaviour, have self-confidence and generally perform better academically.

2.4.2.2.3 Lack of collaboration between teachers and occupational therapists

Collaboration between occupational therapists and teachers is also critical for aiding learners with developmental issues in achieving their educational objectives (Vincent et al., 2008). Occupational therapy can be instrumental and helpful in enabling teachers to best meet the needs of learners in the classroom (Sonday et al., 2012). To change and satisfy environmental needs, occupational therapists provide support and training on teaching methods, how to alter the classroom environment and access assistive technologies (Fedoruk, 2019; Visser et al., 2020). Arendse (2019) suggests that having an occupational therapist as a member of the DBST would speed up the intervention process by offering expertise on evaluations for learners with barriers to learning, shortening the waiting period for learners waiting for DBST intervention. However, Hargreaves et al. (2012) found that educational psychologists and occupational therapists are not school-based in many schools; therefore, teachers and occupational therapists often cannot collaborate effectively due to their busy schedules. The next possible option then is for teachers to collaborate among themselves. One common collaborative approach is to form Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within a school, which is discussed in Chapter 3.

2.4.2.2.4 Insufficient financial resources resulting in irregular school visits

According to Donohue and Bornman (2014), the DoE lacks financial resources, leading to school funding deficits. Zulu (2019) also asserts that scarce resources have a detrimental impact on promoting service delivery in schools, as DBST members find it challenging to visit schools due to lack of transport and therefore, as a result, the considerable time gap between school visits (Nel et al., 2016; Zulu, 2019).

Regarding DBST support visits, DBE (2013b) stipulates that educational districts and circuit offices are expected to perform school visits, classroom assessments, consultations, meetings, relevant input reports and other means, providing an enabling atmosphere and providing and promoting professional development for administrators, teachers, and administrative staff; and keeping educational institutions responsible for their performance. The DBE (2019) reports that some schools have not had a visit from the district in years, others have regular visits, and some only visit once every year. According to Mkhuma et al. (2014), among the challenges teachers face regarding implementing learner support is the lack of quality support from the DBSTs. The other challenge is the inadequate skills of the DBST members**.**

2.4.2.2.5 Insufficient training of personnel

According to Conway (2017), studies show that DBSTs in South Africa are ill-equipped to perform their duties. Makhalemele and Nel (2016) support this, noting that the inadequate skills of DBST members remain one challenge in delivering quality and effective support services to schools in South Africa. Nel et al. (2014) discovered that some teachers believed that DBST members were not sufficiently trained to provide expected support to schools and referred learners. To explain this point, Nel et al. (2016) agree that school support structures are still not sufficiently prepared to perform their duties as set out in the policy guidelines of support services at the district level. This is demonstrated by the fact that various assistance providers do not collaborate on common issues. Teachers' abilities to give educational assistance are not developed holistically, resulting in attending seminars that focus on discrete concerns rather than a comprehensive and coordinated strategy. This backs the scholar's assertion that there are issues with implementing the shifting responsibilities of DBSTs and SBSTs. In addition, the DBST must cope with an overwhelming number of schools and an unclear understanding of the roles of provincial and district offices (Hay, 2021). The slow filling of critical vacancies in many districts and provinces leads to insufficient human capital (PMG, 2016).

Insufficient training of personnel and the slow filling of critical vacancies in many districts and provinces are not the only concerns around the delivery of learner support. In addition, there are other challenges, such as those discussed in the next section.

2.5 CHALLENGES OF LEARNER SUPPORT: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Learner support in South Africa is delivered through face-to-face contact with the teachers, SBST, learners and other role players (DBE, 2010, 2014), but sometimes, the DBST cannot visit schools (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). The DBST is expected to visit all schools in the district at least once a term, with more frequent visits to schools needing intense supervision and guidance and assist schools in enhancing their performance and working toward set goals (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). However, the school monitoring survey 2017/2018 (DBE, 2018) reveals that district visits are made haphazardly, with little long-term preparation or assurance of school visits. The frequency and intent of visits are irregular, clarifying that teachers must be skilled in implementing learner support without the DBST.

2.5.1 Unsatisfactory focus on implementation

Implementing learner support in South Africa seems problematic as in the rest of the world (Chambers & Forlin, 2021; Haug, 2017). Studies show that many countries worldwide struggle to narrow the gap between policy formulation and practice (Groce et al., 2011; Hayes & Bulat, 2017); Viennet & Pont, 2017). Hess (2013) and Zwane and Malale (2018) posit there usually is a significant difference between policy and practice in education. This discrepancy results from the absence of emphasis on the implementation procedures when interpreting policies at the operational level, according to Viennet and Pont (2017). Researchers further argue that implementing education policies is a daunting task which involves several stakeholders, leading to failure if the involved are not well-targeted. Hudson (2013) asserts that policies usually fail due to a lack of proper coordination, a lack of organisational resources, the incapacity of role players or adverse reactions that contribute to ineffective implementation. Successful implementation depends on the choice of the mechanism of implementation. On those grounds, Viennet and Pont (2017) advocate for studying the policy's implementation process to make it more transparent and its implementation more effective. Hess (2020) argues that educational policies are formulated with little regard for the functional processes required to implement them.

Viennet and Pont (2017) assert that research has shown that effective implementation of the SIAS policy (DBE, 2014) in South Africa has been hindered by a lack of coordination between the National Department, the PEDs, the DBSTs and schools, the DBST's insufficient resources – a point discussed later in the text - and the incapacity of teachers to support learners with barriers to learning. The latter is my next point of discussion.

2.5.2 Overcrowded classrooms

The South African education system has overcrowded classrooms that impede learner support implementation (Meier & West, 2020). Marais' (2016) study shows that schools in South Africa

have a learner-teacher ratio that exceeds the recommended 40:1 for primary schools and 35:1 for secondary schools. In a separate study, West and Meier (2020) reveal that some classes have a 50:1 ratio, so teachers cannot pay individual attention to learners who need it (Cassim & Moen, 2020; Imtiaz, 2014) or vary their teaching strategies; therefore, learners may lack motivation because their needs are not adequately catered for (Marais, 2016). Cassim and Moen (2020) point out that maintaining discipline in overcrowded classrooms is daunting, leaving the teacher with little time to present and address the subject. Scott (2017) agrees that crowded classrooms are a phenomenon in South Africa but toned down its impact by pointing out that many overcrowded schools have achieved excellent results.

Inclusive education is about including and giving appropriate support to learners. All structures and policies are put together for the advantage of teachers and learners, supported by the DBST (DoE, 2001). Teachers must be adequately capacitated to provide support to the learners. So in the next chapter, the capacity and experiences of teachers regarding learner support and how teacher training prepares them to support learners with barriers will be explored.

2.6 CONCLUSION

My discussion commenced with the theoretical frameworks that influenced this study, followed by a debate on learner support in international and local contexts. An account of the roles of the SBSTs and the DBSTs in learner support were then presented. Last, I outlined the challenges of learner support in SA. To summarise: the state of inclusive education in South Africa seems to be a challenge of inadequate focus on implementing policy. The EWP 6 lacks specific details on successfully implementing this policy in practice. For the reason that while creating policies, there was little attention paid to the implementation procedures; inclusive education in South Africa is slowly and partially applied. Overcrowded classrooms are also a phenomenon in South Africa, and a barrier to learning needs to be overcome. Teacher training and how it prepares teachers to support learners with barriers will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 : PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS - WITH A FOCUS ON SUPPORTING LEARNERS EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO LEARNING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Learner support was conceptualised in the preceding chapter. In this chapter I will briefly explore the capacity and experiences of teachers regarding learner support and review literature about pre-and in-service teacher training in preparing them to accommodate learners with barriers in their classrooms.

3.2 THE CAPACITY AND EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS REGARDING LEARNER SUPPORT

Anati and Ain's (2012) study reported that teachers feel uncomfortable and unprepared to teach in inclusive classrooms. Many assume that they lack the training and support to address the challenges encountered by learners with barriers. Although teachers have received training on managing and educating learners with barriers, the training programmes are too brief to be effective (Ndinisa, 2016). In other studies, teachers reported that though they have been trained in supporting learners with barriers, the training is not comprehensive enough to cover different dimensions of learner support (Masango, 2013; Mfuthwana, 2016). According to positive psychology, the goal of professional engagement is to reach a point where teachers believe they can optimally support learners with barriers, and this goal may be reached by assisting teachers to flourish (Seligman, 2013). Employees flourish when satisfied with their job and contribute beyond what is expected in their inherent job requirements. To increase teachers' capacity to support learners with barriers, they should be trained to focus on multi-level classroom education, cooperative learning and teaching, and developing learners' strengths and abilities (DBE, 2014; DoE, 2001). To build the capacity of teachers, they must be trained to vary delivery methods so various learning styles are catered for, and learners are not "sent off" to special schools needlessly. Teacher training is the focus of this chapter.

3.3 PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING / INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE)

According to Harmer (2001) and Rusznyak and Walton (2021), teaching is more than merely communicating or transmitting information. It is a multifaceted process that requires the acquisition, implementation and integration of several forms of informational practices and learning (Grosser, 2007) the attention of which should be on the learners, not the teacher. (Generally, in literature, the terms "learner" and "student" are used interchangeably. In this text, "learner" is used to refer to a child being taught (in the classroom) and "student" to a university

student aspiring to become a teacher). For learners to be engaged in the classroom, they must be actively involved (Mufidah, 2019). Learners must also be enabled to become aware, critical thinkers via teaching and learning so they may free themselves and bring about societal change (Lawson, 2011). A strictly practical approach that almost exclusively emphasises the proof of demonstrable results as a determinant of success - while neglecting the importance of knowledge for these abilities to have an effective impact on learning will result in teachers who can replicate the performance in similar contexts but struggle when the context shifts (Sayed et al., 2018). Therefore, teachers must be provided with abilities such as effective class management, organising lessons and comprehending the learners' behaviours in class for teaching to fulfil its intended goal (Harmer, 2001). Pre-service teacher training, according to Mahmud (2013) and Gorgoretti and Pilli (2012), enables pre-service teachers to become quality teachers who possess the instructional techniques and abilities mentioned above to satisfy the rising demands placed on learners and teachers by the teaching profession (Van Nuland, 2011). Pre-service teacher training or ITE produces quality teachers and ensures effective teaching (Sayed et al., 2018).

3.3.1 The benefits of pre-service teacher training

During pre-service teacher preparation, student teachers receive the fundamental knowledge, abilities, and experience necessary to enter the teaching profession (Van Nuland, 2011). The training teaches pre-service student teachers to become quality teachers armed with pedagogical techniques to meet the needs of learners who struggle with learning (Walton, 2018). Through pre-service teacher training, teachers are educated to utilise various approaches related to their subjects of choice and show their competence to lead a class (DoE, 2006). Teachers who have had pre-service teacher training, according to Ragpot (2020), demonstrate competence and accountability as academically and professionally competent practitioners. Pre-service teacher training programmes' structure, curriculum and field experiences must be considered when creating or revising teacher education since they contribute to preparedness (Learning Portal, 2021). Although pre-service teacher training programmes or models vary significantly across countries (Walton, 2018; Wasonga et al., 2015), three standard features prevail. The following section will discuss these common characteristics of pre-service teacher training applied in different countries.

3.3.2 Features of pre-service teacher training

The three standard features of pre-service teacher training that will be discussed in this study are (1) Pedagogical content knowledge – knowledge of a learning area (subject) combined with the ability to explain it, illustrate it, and make it understandable to learners (Pedagogical Content Knowledge: Definition & Explanation, 2016); (2) Field experiences / Practicum - learning to teach

in a mentored and monitored environment (Cohen et al., 2013); and (3) Induction – orientation of new teachers (Berry & Van Driel, 2013).

3.3.2.1 Pedagogical content knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge is a crucial component of teacher competence that affects learners' progress (Loughran et al., 2012). A teacher who possesses pedagogical content knowledge can address pedagogical barriers to learning by adapting his/her teaching style. Such teachers can also develop new skills, redesign learning content, and reach all learners at their particular level (Guerriero, 2014). Pedagogical content knowledge refers to the teacher's ability to apply different techniques applicable to different subjects - and possessing an in-depth grasp of instructive techniques unique to the subject matter according to the learner's developmental age (Kathirveloo et al., 2014; Ojageer, 2019). Pedagogical content knowledge is defined by Koehler and Mishra (2009) as a merging of content and instruction to improve understanding of how certain problems, challenges, and topics are organised, portrayed, and adaptable to individuals' diverse skills and interests (Kathirveloo et al., 2014). According to Guerriero (2014), pedagogical content knowledge is crucial, especially during this era where "education for all" is a universal priority. This aspect of pre-service teacher training is acquired by completing teacher qualifications at higher learning institutions.

In Australia, like in many countries, including South Africa, prospective teachers are deemed competent in pedagogical content knowledge and certified to teach upon attainment of a university qualification. In most territories and states, there are two typical paths. These are to obtain a four-year teaching degree that qualifies you to teach in early childhood or a primary school setting and in certain situations, as a special education teacher, or a secondary school teacher, depending on where you studied (Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2012). The second option is to obtain a junior degree in a specific field plus a postgraduate teaching degree (Deakin University, 2021). Improving the quality of teaching to enhance the efficacy of schooling and improve learner results has been a primary goal of Australian education (Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2012). In this regard there has been a greater interest in using a values-based pedagogical approach in the classroom to improve critical thinking and problem-solving and to create learner belonging and connection (Boon & Maxwell, 2016). According to research, teachers who adopt a values-based educational approach positively affect their learners' learning and life (Lovat, 2007).

Like many other nations that value inclusion, Australia has experienced growth in the number of learners with barriers in ordinary classrooms (Chambers & Forlin, 2021; Duncan et al., 2021; Sharma, 2012). Recently, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnoses in children has increased, and those children are accommodated in ordinary classrooms. Successful inclusion of these learners in regular schools necessitates teachers' knowledge of the social, ASD-related cognitive

and behavioural features and specialised training in assisting these learners (Garrad et al., 2019). Teachers must possess the right attitudes, information, self-efficacy, and skills essential to offer an effective inclusive education that addresses the requirements of all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or skills (Carter & Abawi, 2018; Dally et al., 2019).

Teachers must have the assistance they need to improve their ability to help learners learn effectively. That help must entail continuous professional learning to improve knowledge, attitudes, pedagogical practices and skills (Loreman, 2014; Pearce et al., 2010). However, Dally et al. (2019) and Mergler and Spooner-Lane (2012) argue that graduate teachers are not equipped with the fundamentals of inclusive education. Lovat et al. (2011) postulate that despite the evidence that nations worldwide are changing their education systems, Australia is not restructuring to echo this. However, Chambers and Forlin (2021) believe that pre-service teachers are adequately equipped to support learners with barriers, highlighting it is now mandatory for pre-service teachers to pass special/inclusive education courses to achieve accreditation and meet graduate teachers' standards. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2011) further stipulates that teachers should:

- Respond to the requirements of learners in educational environments by drawing on a corpus of professional knowledge and research.

- Know their learners well, including their diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, be aware of the experiences that learners bring to their classroom and how such experiences influence their constant development.

- Know how to organise their classes to meet the social, physical, and intellectual development and characteristics of their learners.

- Familiarise themselves with the core ideas, organisational structure, and inquiry processes pertinent to the topics they teach and understand what constitutes developmentally appropriate and effective strategies.

Sharma (2012) investigated the impact of taking an inclusive education course on pre-service teachers' attitudes. The research findings showed that pre-service teacher training in Australia positively affect attitudes and effectively qualify teachers to serve learners with learning difficulties. According to Mergler et al. (2016), and Tangen and Beutel (2016), pre-service teacher education programmes that concentrate on inclusive education improve teachers' confidence, attitudes and competence to work in inclusive classrooms.

In the ten provinces of Canada, 62 institutes offer teacher education (Van Nuland, 2011). Each province has the power to adopt and enforce educational legislation and the obligation to

organise, implement and evaluate educational policies and procedures (McCrimmon, 2015). The length of pre-service training programmes ranges from eight months to a five-years post-degree qualification for students who possess a degree in disciplines other than education (Van Nuland, 2011). Usually, prospective teachers adhere to one of two structures sequentially or simultaneously: to receive a Bachelor of Education, students must first complete a three- or four-year undergraduate degree, followed by a two- to four-semester teacher education programme. During this time, they undertake professional and methodological courses. Students must finish a three- or four-year undergraduate degree before moving on to a two- to four-semester teacher preparation programme to acquire a Bachelor of Education. They pursue professional and methodological courses throughout this period. To obtain a degree in a specific field, students often complete undergraduate coursework; this study contains certain teacher education courses. After that, in their fourth or fifth year, they continue their teacher education programme to get a BEd. Few faculties or schools of education allow part-time study, though full-time study is the norm. A programme allows candidates the flexibility to complete their education requirements through three summer sessions, including a practicum. Coursework on IE is incorporated into undergraduate teacher preparation programmes (McCrimmon, 2015; Sharma & Sokal, 2015; Sokal & Sharma, 2017). Although some writers think that a handful of courses on IE do not prepare future teachers to perform in inclusive settings adequately, in a comparative study between Australia and Canada by Sharma and Sokal (2015), it was discovered that after completing a few courses in IE, Australian participants' attitudes improved and their concerns declined. They gained confidence in their capacity to teach in inclusive settings. In a similar vein, Canadian participants' anxieties decreased, and their teaching effectiveness increased.

The United States, like many other nations in the global north, places a significant emphasis on narrowing performance disparities among learners by ensuring that all children have an equitable, fair, and meaningful chance to receive a high-quality education (OECD, 2012). To achieve this objective, in 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was promulgated. The NCLB Act emphasises four pillars within the bill:

- Accountability: guaranteeing the academic achievement of disadvantaged children.
- Flexibility: enabling school districts to creatively use federal education funds to boost learner achievement.
- Research-based education: focusing on educational methods and practices scientifically demonstrated to succeed.
- Parent options: increasing the number of choices accessible to parents of school-aged children (Act, NCLB, 2001).

Despite recommendations to reorganise teacher education and credentials to meet the NCLB's objectives (Darling-Hammon & Youngs, 2002), many states have comparable processes for accrediting teachers. Student teachers must hold a bachelor's degree and have taken courses in their intended learning area and teaching techniques before applying for a teaching certificate. A practicum or student teaching experience is also necessary to pass a set of pedagogy and subject knowledge exams (Ingersoll, 2007). Education in the USA is decentralised, meaning teacher education programmes are primarily state-specific. In this research, I will examine how one state operates regarding pre-service teacher education. Texas is unusual because it pioneered high-level accountability policies that led to the NCLB (Brown, 2010). Texas is distinctive in learner demographics: more than half of the students are Hispanic, making it the state with the most prominent cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity (Templeton et al., 2020).

The curriculum for the teacher preparation programme is based on the authorised educator standards of the State Board for Educator Certification and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for the certificate that the applicant pursues. Child development, learning theories, motivation and unique populations are some subjects covered in the ITE. At least 300 hours must be spent on coursework until one has completed at least 30 hours of fieldwork and 80 hours of study. A full-time student teaching term of at least 12 weeks is required. A bachelor's degree in special education is required of those wishing to become special education teachers. Such students should enrol in an advanced curriculum that teaches kids with exceptional needs. Student teachers must also do a fieldwork practicum at a local school to apply what they have learnt in class in a real-world environment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

3.3.2.2 Pedagogical content knowledge training in Africa

The World Economic Forum ranked the finest education systems, based on skills development in 140 nations, including 38 African countries, in 2021 (Egscholars.com, 2021). This study examined overall education and training available to the workforce for each nation. Interpersonal skills, digital literacy and the capacity to think critically and creatively were all factors considered (Chime, 2019). The World Economic Forum placed Seychelles first among 38 African nations with the finest education. Seychelles is the only country in Africa with one of the top 50 education systems in the world, ranking 43rd ahead of Hungary, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and Russia. This nation is ranked 28th for critical thinking in education and 34th for graduate skillsets. It is Africa's first and only nation to realise the objective of "education for all" (Govinden, 2021). That is, to advance education and early childhood care, to ensure access to free mandatory elementary education, satisfaction of parents' and children's learning requirements, achieving gender equality in education by 2015, to improve adult literacy by 50% and improve all features of excellent education, particularly in life skills, numeracy and literacy (UNESCO, 2004).

Kenya, like South Africa, has had to reform its curricula to meet the population's needs after attaining its independence in 1963. This nation is in its fourth year of adopting a new competency-based curriculum on all levels of education. Learners' critical thinking, competencies, sophisticated problem-solving, and topic mastery are all emphasised in the new curriculum. This is the country's school system's third top-down makeover (Munene, 2021; Templeton et al., 2020). Teachers must be adequately prepared to deliver on their mandate for any curriculum revolution to produce desired results because they work directly with learners, interpret and mould curriculum objectives and theoretical concepts into classroom practice, as well as those who shape the learning environment (Timperley, 2008). To ensure that teachers are qualified to carry out the country's educational mission, prospective teachers in Kenya must complete a junior degree before enrolling in a one-year post graduate education diploma, similar to the South African Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Under the new competence-based curriculum, the BEd teacher training degree that has been in effect for fifty years, will no longer be an option (Simwa & Modiba, 2015). According to Saoke's research (2010) conducted in Kenya's Kisumu East District, pre-service training is disconnected and fragmented. The researcher posits this had a significant detrimental impact on teachers' perceptions of the new work, notwithstanding a gap between ITE and in practice reality. Saoke's results (2010) were consistent with Goodlad's (as cited by Wasonga et al., 2015), who conducted five-year research on teacher education institutions and concluded that teacher education and training are not on track.

Rather than another curriculum reform or revising current ITE programmes, problems with ITE training in Kenya will be addressed via a staff development programme for teachers who emphasises collaboration, active learning and problem-solving of complex topics in the new curriculum (Munene, 2021). Therefore, the author thinks the government should promote site-based in-service professional development by enhancing student learning results. Content-focused in-service professional development at the school site should include active learning, leverage examples of good practice, and encourage cooperation between teachers and administrators, which no pre-service training can provide. This is because universities and colleges do not allow possibilities for such collaboration and practical experience exchange.

3.3.3 Pre-service teacher training in South Africa before 1994

In 1658, shortly after the Dutch East India Company built a refreshment station, formal schooling in South Africa commenced where Cape Town now is (South African History Online, 2021). Teacher training started in major cities and towns like Wellington, Cape Town, Robertson and Grahamstown (Behr, 1988) at the close of the 19th century. However, the training was offered along racial lines, so people of different races did not get the same training (Fiske & Ladd, 2006). When the National Party became the governing party in 1948, apartheid was instituted, and Bantu

education was mandated (South African History Online, 2021). Fourteen teacher training colleges were established during the era of apartheid, albeit for white students only: five in the Transvaal: two English-medium and three Afrikaans-medium; five in the Cape Province, three Afrikaans-medium, one English-medium and one dual-medium; one in the Orange Free State, Afrikaans-medium; and three in Natal, two English-medium and one Afrikaans-medium (Wolhuter, 2006). During the same period, the government established homelands for ten distinct ethnic groups. Every homeland had its government, universities, school system, etc. There were 37 training colleges for black teachers by 1981 (Chisholm, 2010), with a peak of 120 by 1994 (DHET, 2011; Parker, 2002). A college that catered for Indians to teach in primary and secondary school was established in 1951 in Durban, followed by the establishment of the Durban-Westville University in 1961 and another college for Indians in Laudium in Gauteng (then Transvaal) (Pearce, 2013). In 1960, a university was established in the Western Cape to train Coloured students to teach in secondary schools (Britannica, 2015; Wolhuter, 2006).

When apartheid was in effect, the standards for ITE programmes were different for all racial groups, which resulted in dissimilar teacher certifications. According to Christie (1996), in 1988, 62% of African teachers had the highest qualification level of Standard 10 (equivalent to Grade 12), 32% had a lower qualification level, and just 5% had a university degree. White teachers had a university degree in 32% of cases, and none taught in schools with only a Standard 10 certificate. In 1951, according to the then-prime minister's Senate speech, apartheid education was based on inequality. The African child did not need an equal education to that of a white child. Therefore, African teachers did not need to be qualified or highly qualified to teach African children (Sayed et al., 2018). Sayed et al. (2016) posit that apartheid policies aggravated qualification imbalances associated with teacher education. Racial differentiation in entrance requirements and programme quality were mirrored by institutional and provider segregation: The Department of Bantu Education and the Department of Coloured Affairs would, for example, administer teacher colleges designated for each respective apartheid racial category (Sayed et al., 2018). According to a National Teacher Audit conducted in 1995, 36% of teachers were un- or underqualified (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2010). This situation necessitated equality and redressing of past injustices (Moja, 2016).

A massive demand for in-service professional development programmes was created that led to a proliferation of different in-service teacher qualifications. The audit also discovered that new teacher production was inconsistent among provinces, resulting in teacher rationalisation. A teacher rationalisation policy (DoE, 2009) was introduced to address excess teachers in historically elite schools and a teacher shortage in disadvantaged schools. This resulted in the deployment of around 30 000 teachers to schools that did not fulfil the teacher/pupil ratio criterion in various regions. This well-intentioned state equitable initiative caused the loss of high-skilled

and experienced teachers who accepted severance payments and increased the number of teachers paid by the School Governing Bodies of the wealthier schools (Jansen & Taylor, 2003). One hundred and twenty teacher colleges were closed in 1997, and teacher education was absorbed into universities (DHET, 2011). This occurred simultaneously as higher education was reformed, resulting in reducing 36 higher education institutions to 21. Instead of overcoming apartheid's educational inequalities and reducing an oversupply of primary school teachers (Chisholm, 2010; Di Wilmot, 2017), the move resulted in a drop in teacher morale, a decrease in enrolment in ITE programmes, and the teaching occupation no longer seen as a desirable profession. This led the Council on Higher Education, the South African government's quality assurance agency for higher education, to conduct a National Review of Professional Qualifications (Di Wilmot, 2017).

In South Africa, there are now two routes to become a teacher: obtain a Bachelor of Education degree (BEd) or a three or four-year bachelor's degree with school-related subjects, and then obtain a PGCE. Work-integrated learning (WIL) or pre-service teacher training nees to be done before getting certified by the South African Council of Educators (SACE) (DHET, 2015; Nyaumwe et al., 2010).

3.3.3.1 Bachelor of Education (BEd) graduates' preparation for an inclusive environment

The primary goal of the Bachelor of Education degree (BEd) is to offer a comprehensive education that equips graduates with educational theory, the required subject-specific knowledge base and methods to exhibit competence and accountability as newly trained teachers who are both academically and professionally prepared. Emphasis is placed on the value of concepts and theory as a base for beginning a professional teaching career. The basic teachers' skills must be developed specifically for the learning programme as a minimum requirement (DHET, 2015). The degree programme prepares aspiring teachers who can demonstrate specialised expertise and teaching skills, for certain specialisation phases and/or topics throughout their careers. To join the field of education and use what they have learnt as beginning teachers in a range of settings and contexts, graduates of this programme need to have a breadth and depth of knowledge in several subject areas as well as practical skills. When working in an academic or professional teaching context, they should be capable of taking the initiative and responsibility for their actions. In addition, the degree requires the development of intellectual independence and research capability to serve as a foundation for postgraduate studies in education and further training. There are four comprehensive subject domains specific to different phases that the B.Ed graduates may choose from, namely: the foundation, intermediate, senior or further education and training phases or topic choices (DHET, 2015).

Teacher education must enrich BEd graduates with knowledge about learning barriers to demonstrate competence in identifying and addressing these barriers based on learners' individual needs, according to the updated minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications (DHET, 2015). An educator will exhibit a solid mastery of the topic and a wide range of concepts, approaches, and resources relevant to teaching in South African society (DHET, 2015; UNESCO, 2020). As reported by the DHET (2015), school-based WIL is a fundamental aspect of the BEd curriculum. This includes monitored and assessed teaching practice, which the DHET considers necessary. For four years in a full-time contact programme, students must participate in activities professionally monitored and assessed at their respective schools for between 20 and 32 weeks. A maximum of 12 of these weeks, at least three of which must be continuous, should be spent in school each year. Students may have to be physically present in schools for more extended periods in part-time or distance mode programmes, such as being employed as under-qualified or untrained teachers. School-based practice must be monitored and graded in the same way. Everyone who completes a BEd degree must be informed about inclusive education (DHET, 2015), and be able to recognise and address learning difficulties and modify the curriculum to fit the requirements of individual learners in a grade level (UNESCO, 2020). In their analysis of the extent to which BEd curricula from different South African universities prepare teachers for inclusive teaching, Rusznyak and Walton (2021) propose that BEd methodology courses may not devote adequate attention to learner diversity factors relevant to acquiring knowledge of various topics. Student teachers leave the programme with a general awareness of the many forms of learner diversity and a general understanding of the approaches a teacher may take to help learners at risk of experiencing barriers to learning (McKenzie et al., 2020). What is probably not emphasised adequately is how the interconnectivity of different barriers to learning and socially constructed characteristics of diversity may influence learners' ability to learn and participate in classroom activities. Even less consideration seems to be given to identifying diversity features that might significantly affect certain lessons or subjects.

3.3.3.2 Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

The prospective teachers' professional knowledge within the PGCE programme is developed through a structured teaching programme consisting of various modules; some are compulsory core modules, and others are elective modules. The compulsory modules are Education Theory, Language Communication (English, Afrikaans and African languages) and Education Practice modules (Sayed et al., 2018). The PGCE students are offered two subject method specialisations. To qualify for admission to a subject method specialisation, the student must have completed at least a second-year university-level course. Student teachers choose their subject method specialisations from selected teaching subjects aligned with the DHET (2015) and university list of approved subjects. During the PGCE training, student teachers develop a theoretical lens to

understand how structural and classroom approaches may constrain and enhance learning (Rusznyak, 2015). Within the course, knowledge is specifically selected to focus on theoretical, disciplinary and practical knowledge to give student teachers the conceptual tools to analyse the assumptions that constitute effective teaching and learning. A core course within the one-year PGCE programme is the teaching practice component (DoE, 2008) which is designed within a conceptually coherent and contextually responsive curriculum (Sayed et al., 2018).

According to Sayed et al. (2018), the PGCE programme structure allows student teachers to spend nine weeks at two schools (School A and School B). The student teachers complete a week of school and classroom observation during March and April (one week each) – thus, two weeks. During the March teaching practice period, students will experience teaching practice at School A, and during April, they will experience teaching practice at School B for one week. From July to September, students spend seven weeks in School B. Students spend a more extended period at School B to familiarise themselves with the school and build relationships with learners and teachers. PGCE students are assessed four times during the teaching practice period. The university assigns a teaching practice supervisor, and the school assigns a teaching practice mentor (one in each subject area). The teaching practice supervisor visits the student teachers and supports their development throughout the teaching practice period. After the assessment, the supervisor and mentor give the student teachers feedback on their teaching based on criteria set out by the university. Student teachers are familiarised with the assessment criteria during the Education Practice module lectures, and the supervisors brief the student teachers on their school experience before they go to school. ITE aims to extend the prospective teachers' knowledge and experiences and expand their repertoire of teaching-related skills. To effectively prepare pre-service teachers to teach, the ITE curriculum should ideally include experiences in all the domains. Although somewhat prescribed in policy (DHET, 2015), the extent of inclusion is primarily determined by the individual Teacher Education Institutions. Hofmeyer and Hall (1995) proposed that all teacher education qualifications should comprise four essential elements: subject study, educational studies, teaching methodology/didactics and practice, which need to interact with each other dynamically while ensuring that the appropriate balance is achieved. This is probably why the Higher Education Quality Committee's (CHE, 2010) Report on the National Review of Academic and Professional Programmes in Education review of PGCE programmes in South Africa found problems with imbalanced assessment practices, and the time allocated to various components of the ITE courses and teaching practicum (CHE, 2010).

Generally, a school-based practicum allows prospective teachers to observe practice, develop their classroom management and teaching techniques, and implement what they have learnt in the academy in an authentic setting. It also allows them to reflect on and evaluate their skills and knowledge and examine the applicability and relevance of the theoretical preparation in their ITE

programme for practice (Gujjar et al., 2010; Hamaidi et al., 2014). Practical experience is a necessary requirement for acquiring implicit knowledge, a crucial aspect of teacher education that student teachers should pursue (DHET, 2015; Hamaidi et al., 2014; Kiggundu, 2007; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2013). Hamaidi et al. (2014) describe it as the core and central element of teacher professional training programmes. Teaching practice can also be seen as the transition between professional preparation in the university and practice in authentic classroom settings (Dicko, 2010). However, there are challenges concerning the teaching practice component of ITE programmes, according to Hofmeyer and Hall (1995). The 2014 Jet Education Services Report also found variations across programmes/institutions in quantity (length of time spent in schools) and the quality of the provision and consequent experience (Taylor, 2014).

When the inclusive education system was introduced in 2001, teachers needed to be trained to support learners with barriers who would, from that point forward, mainly be educated in ordinary classrooms - as opposed to placing many in special schools as the previous system dictated. Williams et al. (2009) pointed out that teacher training programmes only progressively integrated techniques and skills to include all learners in the classroom between 2002 and 2007. Teachers who qualified before 2002, who make up approximately 80% of the total teacher population according to the DBE (2015), may still employ old methods related to special education to teach in inclusive classrooms (Vandeyar & Killen, 2007), not understanding that learners are to be kept in inclusive classrooms if possible. These teachers did not receive pre-service preparation for the inclusive classroom, yet they are expected to embrace diversity and address inclusive education with little training, insight or expertise (Williams et al., 2009).

Human Rights Watch (2019) reports that university teacher training programmes do not sufficiently prepare teachers for inclusive education. Many teachers struggle to manage inclusive classrooms (Engelbrecht et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2009). Similarly, Naicker (2006) points out that even educated teachers in South Africa are not satisfactorily trained for inclusive education as they lack exposure due to inappropriate pre- and in-service training despite having been oriented to inclusive education's policy objectives and aspirations and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Naicker, 2006). Teachers have been instructed what they must teach and how they must teach itand the timeframes in which they must do so in annual teaching plans published in CAPS (Booysen, 2018; DBE, 2011). CAPS even outline the objectives for each subject and the specific skills, knowledge, and suggestions for the activities teachers may employ to meet these goals and build the essential capabilities (DBE, 2011). Booysen (2018) contends that devoting attention to strategies outlined in the CAPS document will not help enhance teacher skills for the inclusive classroom, as teachers are not given a leeway to vary their content delivery and assessment style or to respond to the various abilities of learners. Teachers will always feel inadequate when they must adapt instruction in accordance with learners' requirements. (De

Jager, 2013; Engelbrecht et al., 2013). According to the DBE (2015), teachers lack the expertise to handle and accommodate learners with learning impairments and the ability to ensure that learners actively participate in the curriculum successfully. Therefore, pre-service training on pedagogical content knowledge becomes vital since it empowers teachers with the knowledge of their subjects and provides strategies for presenting in an understandable way to all learners (Marshman & Porter, 2013).

After evaluating the delivery of the curriculum in five South African teacher training universities, Taylor (2014) concluded that ITE was generally of poor quality as it lacked in terms of equipping teachers with the required subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. These findings are consistent with Deacon (2016), who found from his study that their training provided inadequate classroom-focused methodology or pedagogy and little opportunity to engage with the current curriculum.

3.3.4 Pre-service teacher training for the inclusive classroom

There is little research about how the practicum prepares student teachers for the inclusive classroom. Many teachers are trained, and some are supported to implement the SIAS strategy only when in-service - and mainly through workshops (Ngubane, 2018). Teachers often also have little opportunity to observe a mentor's role modelling (Hess, 2020). According to Sepadi (2018), student teachers believe that ITE did not effectively educate them about working in an inclusive workplace. Some claim to recognise and categorise barriers, but they cannot establish an inclusive learning environment beneficial to all. Prior to the implementation of inclusive education, teachers were prepared for either mainstream education or special education; thus, they thought they cannot provide the necessary support in an inclusive classroom and that the requirements of learners who encounter learning difficulties can be best served in separate classes (Nel et al., 2016).

In the De Jager (2013) study, teachers reported that they could not use differentiated and flexible curricula to ensure that learners' needs are appropriately accommodated. Human Rights Watch (2019) also reported that South African teachers lack training and awareness about inclusive teaching methods, the range of impairments that learners may have, and knowledge and practical training about the needs that learners may have as a result of their impairments and barriers. This lack of awareness and practical know-how in accommodating learners' limitations are barriers for learners who may require special assistance.

3.3.4.1 Field experiences / Practicum

According to Mensah et al. (2018), WIL/field experience/practicum is the most crucial component of pre-service teacher training. WIL, field experiences and teaching practice/practicum are used

interchangeably in literature; in this study, I prefer to use the word practicum. The South African Council on Higher Education defines practicum as an educational approach that benefits both the pre-service teacher and the school by aligning academic and workplace practices. According to Fafunwa (cited in Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017), there is consensus that the practicum is critical to teacher preparation because it supports pre-service teachers as they grow and develop as teachers. While coursework and pedagogical content learning empower future educators with the knowledge to succeed in their careers, the practicum equips them with the teaching skills required (Deacon, 2016; Nzilano, 2013). According to Taylor (2016), the practicum acts as a bridge between a novice and a professional in teaching. During the practicum period, student teachers can test out their skills in lesson planning, presentation, classroom management and professional development (DHET, 2015; Mkhuma, 2012).

Practicums vary in duration, sequence, and supervision (Learning Portal, 2021). The training may be conducted in several ways (Perry, 2004). The practicum period for BEd students at some universities lasts 24 weeks, spread throughout the study with more intense practical learning during the fourth year (DHET, 2015). At certain institutions, all PGCE learners undertake two weeks of observation before the March holiday, then four weeks of teaching practice in May, and another four weeks in July and August, which add up to two and half months. Other universities allocate approximately 12 weeks per year to teaching practice. Upon registration for the PGCE, it is assumed that learners have attained the subject knowledge throughout their prior learning, and the PGCE programme aims to supplement that knowledge with the information and skills to teach. Generally, student teachers are placed in a range of functional schools according to their choice of study (Gravett & Jiyane, 2019). Functional schools continually work to maximise learner potential despite the challenges they may encounter. Such schools recognise the importance of supporting the growth of student teachers and demonstrate an obligation to do so (DHET, 2015) by enabling student teachers to participate in various educational experiences around the country. The evaluation is conducted by university lecturers who visit schools during the practicum period to assess student teachers' performances. However, the students are generally led and overseen by the mentor teachers at the training schools (Kwatubana & Bosch, 2019).

While there is consensus that practicum is an important aspect of pre-service teacher education, the optimum setting is up for debate. Gravett and Jiyane (2019) believe that placing student teachers in innovative and highly functional schools is necessary for the learners to be given the greatest possible opportunity to become successful teachers. This belief coincides with Ronfeldt et al. (2015), who express that while student teachers may begin their teaching careers in lower-functioning schools, they will become even more effective teachers should they continue doing their practicum in highly functional schools. But according to Cherry (2020) and White and Forgasz (2016), exposing student teachers exclusively to middle-class schools may not

effectively prepare them for the issues that exist in low-income schools. Robinson (2016) proposes that student teachers should be placed in genuinely varied South African environments, arguing that this will make teacher education more authentic.

According to the DHET (2015), newly trained teachers need to be aware of diversity in the South African context to teach in a manner that includes all learners. Teachers should also be capable of successfully managing classes in various settings to create a positive learning environment. To complete their pre-service teacher training, teachers must undergo induction into their new roles. It is acknowledged that no matter how competent ITE programmes are they may not provide future teachers with all they need for a lifetime of classroom work (Osamwonyi, 2016).

In-service training therefore becomes necessary to supplement teachers' information and expertise.

3.4 IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

Some have nicknamed teaching the profession that devours its own (Carlson, 2012). According to reports, most teachers are worried, overwhelmed, unsupported, afraid, and anxious at the start of their careers (Cipriano et al., 2020). According to Nkosi (2020), 25% of South African teachers experience work-related stress - greater than the OECD norm of 18%. Being held accountable for learners' progress, and having too much marking and administrative responsibilities are the three most common causes of stress for teachers in South Africa. In urban schools, overcrowding is ostensibly linked to stress caused by excessive marking. The curriculum is connected to stress caused by too much administrative work. Teacher unions have claimed that following the 2011 revisions, the curriculum forced them to do too much administrative work. Teachers in South Africa who express 'a lot' of stress at work are 40% more likely to want to resign within a five-year period (Loewus, 2021). According to the report, more than a quarter of teachers in the country have no desire to continue teaching. Thirty per cent of all teachers say they want to retire from teaching within the next five years, while the OECD average is 25%. Between 2012 and 2020, over 57 000 permanent teachers quit, according to Nkosi (2020). One issue appears to be inadequate remuneration; 70% of employees are dissatisfied with their pay. The South African scenario is not unique; the UK, Norway, and Australia, for example, experience between 30 and 40% of new teacher resignations every year, with Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy seeing close to 50% (Ingersoll, 2007; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

In-service training aims to help teachers, schools and educational systems perform more effectively and efficiently (Altun, 2011), and hopefully reduce drop out. Teachers must be trained in new skills and updated techniques to fulfil their duties successfully and efficiently (Osamwonyi, 2016). It is widely acknowledged that no time spent in college or university would prepare a

teacher for real classroom duties (Altun, 2011). If teachers want to become true leaders in their schools, they must continue their education beyond graduation, continually implementing new approaches (Amadi, 2013).

Although not always successful, the most popular modalities for providing in-service training for teachers include short courses, meetings and workshops (Tsotetsi, 2013). There are many different supports for in-service teachers (DoE, 2008), but the most effective seems ongoing, centred on the needs of teachers, school-based and collaborative (Learning Portal, 2021). Some methods of in-service training that will be discussed next include the induction of new teachers, continuing professional teacher development (CPTD), mentoring, monitoring, observation or assessment, feedback and collaborative support.

3.4.1 Induction of new teachers

For many graduates, transitioning from initial teacher training to practising as a professional teacher is difficult (Kadenge, 2019). The early years of their careers provide several problems since this is a time of discovery, learning, adaptation, and survival (Feiman-Nemser, 2010). It is when school and classroom realities are confronted. Many early career teachers, especially those who have just graduated, devise survival methods that might indicate great practice. Early career teacher experiences are often so intense that they can profoundly affect subsequent career phases. According to Feiman-Nemser (2010), the first year of teaching is a challenging and formative stage in learning to teach, affecting not just whether individuals stay in teaching but also what sort of teachers they become. Since there is a consensus that ITE does not equip beginning teachers for school demands and classroom realities (Deacon, 2016; Kadenge, 2019), teacher induction programmes significantly aid new teachers in developing into capable and efficient professionals. (Helms-Lorenz et al., 2016). According to Fantili and McDougall (2009) and Wong et al. (2005), induction is used to help new teachers become competent practitioners. The goal of a well-planned and implemented induction programme is to enhance teaching styles and methods, to help new teachers get used to the job and stay in it (Maringe & Prew, 2015); also to ease their transition into the school system and promote early work satisfaction, and to influence their choice to continue in the profession and improve learner results and strengthen their pedagogical and instructional strategies (Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Wong, 2004).

Cochran-Smith (2012) further argues that strengthening one's pedagogical and instructional strategies and techniques happen when new teachers work with mentors who enhance their pedagogical and instructional strategies and methods. Owing to the importance of the induction of new teachers, the Department of Basic Education has provided the document New Teacher Induction: Guidelines for the Orientation Programme (DBE, 2017). The guidelines stipulate that systems should be developed for the induction and mentoring of new teachers to eliminate

frustrations that often lead to teachers exiting the profession prematurely (Loewus, 2021). According to the DBE (2017), the first year of employment for new teachers should be viewed as an induction phase, during which they should be assisted in all work areas. However, new teachers must be given sincere support in their first few weeks of work to help them adjust to their new surroundings.

3.4.1.1 Purpose of teacher induction

Early in their careers, many teachers are not familiar with the organisation of the subject matter and ways to present it to learners in an understandable manner, paced and sequenced correctly (Wong, 2004). The purpose of teacher induction and other professional development programmes is to assist teachers to teach more effectively with superior pedagogical topic understanding to guarantee that learners succeed and accomplish their goals. Thus, many educational systems have put a lot of emphasis on induction programmes for new teachers who focus on how they teach, especially how they connect theory and practice so that learners have better experiences and learn more (Wechsler et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2005).

Induction programmes should consider the emotional and affective experiences of new teachers and how to ensure that early career teachers are successfully integrated into their new workplaces (Flores & Day, 2006; Menon, 2012). According to Menon's (2012) research, early career teachers often experience isolation, animosity from other teachers, and a lack of support. According to Wong (2004), early career teachers globally worry about a lack of collegial exchange where they may feel like they belong to a group and a network. Such unpleasant working conditions cause many issues for teachers, including stress, poor morale, and job discontent, contributing to high turnover rates (Anastasiou & Papakonstantinou, 2014). Therefore, induction should enable new teachers to become part of a community where they can contribute to the well-being of the school community. Early career teachers' integration into the organisational structure is as vital as classroom practices (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). One of the critical goals of teacher induction is to reduce teacher attrition by offering effective teaching approaches, easing the transition into teaching, and increasing the retention rate of highly trained practitioners (Kutsyuruba et al., 2016). Well-designed induction programmes, according to Ingersoll and Strong (2011), assist in boosting teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction and teacher retention.

3.4.1.2 Rationale for teacher induction

The number of new teachers graduating from South African Institutions of higher learning has increased significantly from 6978 in 2009 to nearly doubling to 13708 in 2012 (Bernstein, 2015). In 2011, 10 370 new teachers graduated from public universities compared to the early to mid-2000s, when between 5000 and 7000 new teachers were released into the profession per annum

(DoE, 2005). This marked an astounding 74,5% increase. In his Budget Speech at the National Council of Provinces, the then Minister of Higher Education and Training mentioned that the department was expecting to produce well over 20 000 new teacher graduates by 2019 (DHET, 2015). 47 492 new teachers graduated in 2019 (DHET, 2021), and these newly appointed teachers must be in a position to:

- cope with the practicalities of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Ingersoll, 2007);
- have opportunities of accessing and emulate effective instructional practices from long-serving teachers in their new school context. It is difficult for early career teachers to start and improve their teaching in isolation. Hence, opportunities to discuss their teaching, analyse learners' work and examine problems with other colleagues need to be provided; and
- have the luxury of having long-serving teachers nurturing and developing them to benefit the profession in the long run.

It is evident from this discussion that induction should be considered in African educational institutions. There is widespread agreement that systematic and long-term induction programmes for early career teachers will help them (Magudu, 2014; Maringe & Prew, 2015), but it can be conclusively shown that little is done in terms of induction of early career teachers (Maringe & Prew, 2015).

3.4.1.3 Induction for newly qualified teachers in African contexts

Literature on induction is rare, implying that induction techniques are non-existent in certain settings and when they exist, they are primarily informal and ad hoc (Maringe & Prew, 2015; Nyoagbe, 2010; Vlaamse Vereeniging vir Ontwikkeling Bestuur (VVOB) South Africa, 2020). According to empirical studies undertaken in Kenya (Wasonga et al., 2015), Ghana (Nyoagbe, 2010), and Zimbabwe (Magudu, 2014), basic orientation formalities in which newly trained teachers are provided information about the school's social and procedural difficulties are common. According to studies mentioned above, most early career teachers in the African contexts appear to face challenges with classroom management, time management, lesson planning, record keeping, learner assessment, and generally translating and using pedagogical strategies learnt in pre-service training into their daily lives' practices. Therefore, it is necessary to do research that gives insight into how to help early career teachers in African culture, given these obstacles.

Similarly, in South African public schools, literature on induction procedures is scarce (VVOB South Africa, 2020), necessitating further study in this field. In their analysis of literature on induction patterns in Africa, Maringe and Prew (2015) indicate that the area is under-theorised,

and the lack of empirical investigations in South Africa attests to the need for further study in that direction. For example, both the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED) (DoE, 2007) and the Integrated Strategic Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) (DBE, 2011) guide professional development activities in South Africa. Both documents stipulate that new teachers must undergo formal induction and mentorship for at least two years. These aspirations have been policy imperatives simply on paper for a long time, with no supporting action. Meanwhile, most schools use ad hoc induction techniques (Kadenge, 2019).

3.4.1.4 Induction of new teachers in South Africa

The DoE (2005) has made teacher induction a priority since 2005 though it is argued that it has only been on paper and not practised. The DoE has established various policies and procedures to help in teacher induction (VVOB South Africa, 2020). Some of these policies contradict each other; for example, DBE (2017) states it is essential that all new teachers participate for about two years in a structured introduction and mentorship programme, and the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development, 2011–2025, (DHET, 2011) states that teachers should be inducted for one year, including classroom observations.

According to DHET (2011), Induction should consist of two major components: a personalised professional development and support programme and an evaluation against the key professional standards for teachers. To assist the inductee, an induction mentor should be assigned. As good practice, Howe (2006) proposes that the inductee should have a reduced teaching load during induction and be given time to observe other teachers, interact with colleagues, and respond to the mentor's guidance, who evaluates his/her practice and recommends strategies to improve the quality of the classroom interactions. This proposal is in line with Kearney's (2014) assertion that effective induction programmes across the globe provide newly certified teachers with decreased teaching time and load, so they may undertake other specified duties. According to Ngwira and Potokri (2019), not all South African schools induct new teachers, and some do it informally. According to Hudson (2012), the induction of new teachers does not materialise in many schools in SA. Its purpose is unclear, and it is also unclear whose responsibility it is to conduct the induction programme (Mamba, 2020). The New Teacher Induction Guidelines for the Orientation Programme (DBE, 2017) stipulate that the induction and orientation for new teachers should be conducted before or shortly after they start in their new positions. For example, the initial sessions might be offered on days when teachers must be at school before the schools reopen to learners; then, after the term has begun, at certain times throughout the school day and in the afternoons. Because not all new teachers are assigned to positions and begin their careers at the same time each year, teacher induction should be provided throughout the year. Schools are expected to design their strategies for induction, and they may opt to continue offering induction at specific

intervals and by invitation. However, it is not clear who at the schools should be responsible for the induction of new teachers.

3.4.1.5 The organisational form and focus of teacher induction

While there are various motivations for implementing induction programmes, a link should exist between the role of an induction programme and its content, emphasis and form. De Clercq and Shalem (2014) argue that different teacher learning activities differ in their form and teaching focus. Whether an induction programme is purposed to enhance teacher effectiveness, strengthen pedagogical content knowledge, socialise new teachers, or retain them in the profession, the organisational arrangements for that programme ought to be appropriately tailor-made for its particular purpose and focus. A crucial factor to look at besides the content of an induction programme is its organisational form - the duration and pacing of the teacher learning and the resource requirements. These are important considerations if an induction programme is to be effective in addressing the purpose for which it was designed.

A concept closely related to induction is mentoring. These two are used synonymously or interchangeably, yet are different. Therefore, I must differentiate between the two before proceeding to discuss mentoring for in-service teachers in the next section. Induction programmes, according to Kaufmann (2007), include mentoring. Mentorship is one process of induction. In education, principals, designated teachers, subject advisers, and other members of the DBST serve as mentors for newly qualified teachers. Mentoring is supporting new or inexperienced employees with a more knowledgeable or experienced other.

3.4.2 Mentoring in the education context

Mentoring is passing on information, psychological support and social capital that the receiver perceives to be beneficial to his/her career and professional growth (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). Mentoring is defined in DoE (2008) as a continuing professional association between an experienced individual/teacher and a newly qualified teacher, where one has acquired new knowledge and skills while the other has not. A mentor who is a role model to the mentee offers advice and support to a mentee in several areas, such as attitudes, experience, values and skills (Borello, 2019). Mentoring involves more than just two individuals talking and exchanging information. Some variables that support the mentoring process are the mentor's traits and practices, the setting or context in which mentoring occurs, and the matching of the mentor and mentee engaged in the relationship (Hudson, 2013). According to Ekechukwu and Horsfall (2015), mentoring in education is considered a mechanism for the professional growth of novice teachers and empowers teachers' continuing and lifetime development. Information is shared between two people through frequent face-to-face contact and over a long period, one of whom

is deemed to know more, has more wisdom or experience, and is still learning (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007; Hugo, 2006).

According to Allen (2009), mentoring bridges the theoretical and practical divides in teacher education. The theory learnt during pre-service training and experience in the classroom are valued by novice teachers. Thus, mentoring strives to achieve a balance between the two. Mentoring assists others in growing, developing, and realising their full potential and encouraging others to achieve personal and professional progress (Metros & Yang, 2006). During the mentoring process, the mentor assists mentees in assessing where they are and where they want to go by setting personal goals, particularly concerning their professional and skills growth, so that a beneficial connection may emerge in which a secure place is created to enable discussion and freely expressing sentiments (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). Heiney-Smith and Denton (2015) discovered that mentorship is most successful for newly qualified teachers when they observe more seasoned teachers in action - and from seeking advice from other colleagues.

Mentoring in education tries to develop younger teachers new to the field by matching them with a more experienced volunteer who acts as positive role model (Ekechukwu & Horsfall, 2015). Akhalq et al. (2016) found that teachers are likelier to stay in the schools where they first train in their subject areas. The benefits and concerns about mentoring are discussed hereafter.

3.4.2.1 Benefits of mentoring

Superior-Greenstone (2011) posits that teachers are inspired to carry out plans and attain objectives when mentorship is performed efficiently. Teachers are given constructive comments to assist them in exploring other possibilities for enhancing their work or careers and feeling heard. Mentoring allows the mentor to acquire insight into the challenges or traps the mentee may experience in their present job, allowing them to assist the mentee in overcoming these obstacles. Superior-Greenstone (2011) lists the advantages of a good mentorship programme as follows:

- enhances abilities and understanding of the educational environment, more effectiveness in classrooms, and classroom management;
- boosts self-assurance in abilities and fosters personal fulfilment from doing good for others;
- cultivates professional development within the teaching career;
- the mentor assists mentees in identifying talents that may be improved and practiced and receiving feedback, and

- mentors would act as a sounding board for mentees' worries, ideas, and professional goals and ask probing questions that would push mentees to research subjects or confront their beliefs.

In addition to the benefits listed above, mentoring is important because mentoring enhances productivity, increases productivity, promotes professional development, improves skill development, promotes personal and emotional support, creates a sense of empowerment, improves communication and promotes learner performance.

- **Mentoring and the relationship with productivity**

Ferreira and Du Plessis (2009) define productivity as the amount and quality of output a person can achieve with resources. Pekuri et al. (2011) again define productivity as the connection between a system's production and the input elements to achieve that output. According to Productivity South Africa (2022), productivity is more than measuring how efficiently resources are utilised to generate results. Working smarter, not harder, is the key and using less to accomplish more. Productivity is a mentality of always looking for new and better methods to complete activities. According to the definitions above, productivity is a process where outcomes are created using some resources. In the case of education, this could refer to how much resources the system, school and teacher invest to achieve required outcomes. According to Mukeredzi et al. (2015), successful mentorship is the most potent method for providing new teachers with the essential insights and expertise to increase their efficiency and productivity at work. Productive staff members feel more gratified in their workplaces and are more committed to the business (Vance, 2006). Therefore, when mentoring incorporates skills development, the performance of employees improves - enabling them to be more productive (Akhalq et al., 2016).

3.4.2.1.1 Improving skills development

A major objective of mentorship programmes in education is to support recent graduates entering the field as teachers to develop their skills (Ekechukwu & Horsfall, 2015). Teachers can keep learners longer in their classroom and avoid unnecessary referrals if their ability to support learners with barriers is adequate. This statement is indirectly supported by Holtbrügge and Ambrosius (2015). They stated that an essential outcome of mentoring is the professional development of human capital to produce desired results given available resources.

3.4.2.1.2 Promoting professional development

Professional growth consists of a series of interrelated learning events that are methodical, deliberate, and planned across time to enhance teacher practice and learner accomplishment (Chester, 2015). According to Ayodeji and Adebayo (2015), novice teachers will be efficiently

knowledgeable about their new workplace if they receive guidance through mentoring, resulting in a sense of empowerment and the promotion of professional development. Professional development is discussed in further detail in Section 3.4.5 below.

3.4.2.1.3 Getting learners to perform better

There is a growing understanding that the effectiveness of the teacher is the most critical element in influencing learner achievement (Sheils & Rutherford, 2014). Teachers themselves continue to place high importance on learners' academic success (Farooq et al., 2011), particularly during this period, where media stories about learners' poor performance are often published. According to Onjoro et al. (2015), teachers significantly affect a nation's teaching-learning outcomes, which may be favourable or unfavourable depending on how well instruction is delivered in the classroom. According to research, skilled teachers are more likely to succeed in the classroom, which should improve learner accomplishment (Mukeredzi et al., 2015). So, inexperienced teachers will benefit from the coaching, mentorship, and support of more seasoned teachers as they develop and favourably affect the academic attainment of their learners (Heiney-Smith & Denton, 2015). It is crucial to enhance the teaching abilities of new teachers (Tahir et al., 2014). The support and direction of a more seasoned individual (mentor) will have a favourable impact on the quality and teaching abilities of new teachers, which will raise and support learners' academic performance in their classrooms.

3.4.2.2 Considerations concerning mentorship

According to Du Plessis (2013), the South African education system is in crisis; issues such as poor management and communication, lack of principal support, a lack of mentor training, and non-mentoring all have a negative impact on the practice, leaving newly qualified teachers disenchanted and demotivated (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Yördem & Akyol, 2014:). Effective mentorship is the key to averting the issues mentioned above so new teachers' professional growth can occur (Yördem & Akyol, 2014). Yet, a study by Yördem and Akyol (2014) reveals that mentees become frustrated because their mentors appear not to be properly trained. The writers aver that mentors seem to possess limited knowledge of the value of mentoring, the function a mentor should play, any guidelines for what they should do, and the general spread of information about mentoring. To comprehend the frustrations of mentors and mentees, Aspfors and Fransson (2015) suggested that policymakers should prioritise identifying issues affecting the proper execution of a mentoring programme.

Even though South African teachers think more can be done to make mentoring through advisory and support visits more effective, according to Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018), teachers' views regarding advisory and support visits by subject advisers were that the support provided was

inadequate owing to the perceived unskillfulness of the members of the DBST who offer such support. The perceived unskillfulness of the members of the DBST aligns with findings from studies by Mavuso (2013) that showed that most subject advisers were unprepared to provide professional support to teachers in the classroom. Despite the concerns expressed by some teachers, others stated that they valued the assistance offered by subject advisers. This assertion is in line with De Clercq and Shalem's (2014) research. They reported that advisory workshops broadly guide the curriculum, new terms and information, knowledge of the subjects and preferred methods of instruction, and sequencing and timing of the curriculum.

3.4.2.2.1 Mentoring of teachers increases the workload of subject advisers

Mentoring and coaching are additional tasks performed mainly by subject advisers during on-site visits for advisory work. According to Asamani et al. (2015), mentoring of teachers increase the workload of subject advisers, resulting in insufficient preparation time. Mentors have expressed that one of the detrimental aspects that inhibited them from performing their duties as mentors was increased workload (Tahir et al., 2014). According to Asamani et al. (2015), there is a clear connection between an employee's workload and productivity. Increased workloads put workers under stress and create conflicts between work and personal lives, which leads to reduced levels of job satisfaction, poorer morale, melancholy, anxiety, helplessness, frustration, dread, and despair, as well as lower self-esteem (Ali & Farooqi, 2014). According to Abbasi (2015), these effects of job overload would lower employee productivity, negatively affecting their workplace.

3.4.2.3 The role of school management

Tahir et al. (2014) reported that mentors feel unhelpful and disheartened when the school administration is uncooperative about the mentoring programme since the mentoring process is heavily influenced by school administration and leadership by giving support and required direction to mentors and mentees (Yördem & Akyol, 2014). In agreement, Watkins (2016) asserts that principals are crucial to mentoring because they control the environment in which it occurs. According to the research conducted by Watkins (2016) regarding the implementation of a mentoring programme, the school administration must offer support, develop skills, effectively communicate, recognise achievement, offer guidance, know how to implement and manage the mentoring programme, pair mentors and mentees, hold follow-up meetings and implement an orientation programme for new teachers.

The Alberta Teachers' Association (2015) discovered that mentorship by the school administration also plays a crucial part in assisting new teachers when they begin their careers and increasing retention rates by offering assistance and teaching skills. It is the responsibility of the school administration to provide teachers with a structured system of support that enables

them to be effective, get acquainted with their school and district, improve their practices, and comprehend their professional obligations (Chester, 2015). According to Buchanan et al. (2013), it is crucial to make new teachers feel appreciated, offer them the support they need to succeed long-term in their teaching and encourage good experiences. In support of such an assertion, the DBE's (2011) position is that administrators, in particular principals, must provide new teachers with assistance from the time they arrive at their new school. Mentoring and on-site orientation may help with this. According to the remarks, it will be easier for newly certified teachers to move from the unknown to the known if there is a structured support system with management offering help in a mentorship programme. According to Chester (2015), new teachers may be more effective, get more acquainted with their school, improve their practise, and comprehend their professional obligations with a structured framework of support and communication. It is also important to note how school management communicates the implementation process of the mentoring programme to the school community. According to the Alberta Teachers' Association (2015), one key factor affecting the success of a mentoring programme is how well school administration informs the school community about the mentoring programme's implementation process. The above statement is backed by Chester (2015), who suggests the development and implementation of a communication plan for informing relevant role players about the mentoring programme and recruiting prospective mentors. According to Superior-Greenstone (2011), the school administration must provide communication tools while designing and conducting a mentorship programme at their institution. Information and ideas may flow "top-down," "bottom-up," or "horizontally" as described hereafter (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2011):

- **Downward channels:**

This information is sent from the principal to the staff to guide and coordinate information distribution.

- **Upward channels:**

Upward communication from the teachers reaches the management. When staff members are engaged in decision-making, this form of communication occurs.

- **Horizontal channels:**

Horizontal communication occurs between individuals at the same level of the school's organisational structure, such as between teachers or management personnel.

As discussed, communication between management and teachers is a useful technique that administrators may use to get information from teachers. Additionally, excellent communication may help to strengthen the bond between principals and their teams. Marishane et al. (2011) stress that administrators may motivate teachers by fostering relationships that foster a climate

of mutual trust and ongoing support by demonstrating interest in the work that teachers accomplish. From the discussion, it can be inferred that mentoring is an important tool and method of in-service training that improves teaching and learning and, eventually learners' performance.

According to DoE (2008), an equally important method is monitoring. Monitoring is another school-based professional development strategy that entails classroom visits and observation of learning and teaching practices (Smith, 2015).

3.4.3 Monitoring

As per legislation from the DoE (2006), school principals and HODs must set specific standards for their learners and teachers, conduct regular class visits, and provide feedback as part of their responsibilities. Monitoring involves putting in place performance checks to see whether the goals are being reached according to schedule (DoE, 2008). The DBE's fundamental goal is to raise the quality of basic education, cultivate teaching, school management, and support, and raise learner test scores in Grades 1 through 9 (DBE, 2011, 2013). Monitoring through class visits affords principals, HODs, and peers to measure the teachers' accomplishments (DBE, 2015b). In addition to mentoring, subject advisers utilise class visits as another tool for mentoring. Class visits allow the subject adviser to observe what is happening in the classroom to determine the required assistance (Tatana, 2014). Therefore, class visits are beneficial as tools for both mentoring and monitoring; subject advisers may use classroom visits to advise teachers on areas that need improvement, where they are making satisfactory progress, or where they are excelling. Mentees may also require clarification from knowledgeable others (DBE, 2015b).

Classroom visits were stated to be potentially beneficial to both the observer and the observed teacher because there is an opportunity for both to gain a vast amount of new knowledge about their abilities and insights into the areas where they could make improvements in their performance (Richards & Farrell as cited in Mnisi, 2016). Teachers can reflect on their profession during these visits; thus, job stress may be reduced, and learners' academic achievements prioritised.

3.4.4 Observation or assessment

Observation or assessment is a professional development activity in which two colleagues benefit from one another's expertise via observation and instant feedback (Shabani, 2016). Both the observing and the observed teachers learn from each other. Using the suggestions supplied by the observer, the observed teacher improves his/her teaching methods, and the observing teacher can carefully analyse and consider the overlooked parts during her/his teaching (Shabani, 2016). SACE recommends this professional growth method as it allows teachers to assist

colleagues in advancing their careers by exchanging information, resources and ideas (DoE, 2006).

3.4.5 Professional development

A study by Glover et al. (2016) has determined that professional development is one of the top enabling variables for creating positive change. According to Richards and Schmidt (2003), professional development is the professional growth teachers achieve due to gaining experience and knowledge and systematically examining their teaching methods. According to Sze et al. (2019), effective and efficient professional development has been recognised as a crucial component in improving professional practice and student outcomes and creating school-based conditions for sustainability. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) define effective professional development as organised, professional learning that enhances learning outcomes and transforms teachers' practices. CPTD can be defined as a collection of activities to assist teachers in responding to a continuously changing educational environment. There are different forms of professional development, namely mentoring (already discussed), regular feedback, and observation.

3.4.5.1 Continuing professional teacher development (CPTD)

In July 2009, the Teacher Development Summit brought together key stakeholders across the teacher education and training sector in South Africa (Robinson, 2016). The purpose was to identify and solve teachers' professional development issues (DBE, 2019). The summit concluded with a statement committing South Africa to develop a new, reinforced, integrated national plan for educator development - the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED). The ISPFTED is a continuing planning process that will rely on feedback from all parties involved in teacher education and development and will eventually improve the quality of teacher education and development (DBE, 2019). One outcome of the ISPFTED was CPTD. CPTD refers to all professional development activities, programmes, and modules in which in-service teachers and other educators participate to advance their careers (DBE, 2011).

CPTD is defined as ongoing teacher training and education designed to help educators keep abreast of the ever-shifting demands of the modern classroom (Leclercq, 1996; Moekwa, 2020). According to DBE (2011), CPTD refers to all professional development activities, programmes, and modules in which in-service teachers and other educators participate to advance their careers. South Africa needs qualified teachers with enough training and development to meet the country's changing problems and requirements (Steyn, 2011). CPDT's objective is to provide teachers with the skills they need to succeed in a democratic South Africa in the 21st century

(Steyn, 2011) by fostering the improvement of both teaching skills, subject expertise and teachers' competency through upgrading their qualifications. According to the revised National Education Policy Act, CPTD primarily empowers unqualified teachers in practice by assisting them to survive in the teaching profession, allowing unqualified teachers to qualify themselves better and qualified teachers to continue professional development to acquire additional skills (Osamwonyi, 2016) or upgrade existing skills (Altun, 2011).

3.4.5.1.1 The purpose of CPTD

The purpose of CPTD is to offer teachers ongoing professional development to improve their effectiveness - which is defined by Learning Portal (2021) as the teacher's ability to improve learners' participation and to learn as measured by learners' attainment of expected results. Mokgalane (SACE, 2012) states that the objective of continuing professional development is to guarantee that all professional development initiatives advance education in the nation more directly and effectively by enhancing subject matter knowledge and teachers' expertise (SACE, 2012). Teachers study new teaching practices as part of their professional development, which helps them enhance their education quality. This allows them to change how they teach their learners, incorporating innovative teaching methods in the classroom and changing their day-to-day teaching methods (SACE, 2013). According to Steyn (2011), the CPDT system helps teachers develop their teaching abilities by efficiently preparing them to carry out their vital and demanding jobs and continuously enhancing teachers' professional competence and performance to offer high-quality education. In the context of inclusive education, teacher effectiveness may be measured by the teacher's ability to support learners with barriers in an inclusive classroom (Mfuthwana, 2016) and therefore, keep the learners in the inclusive classroom as long as possible. During this era of inclusive education, CPTD should also be a tool to facilitate a paradigm shift (Motitswe, 2017) from the old, which was characterised by focusing on weaknesses rather than the strengths of learners and viewing any non-conformity as deficits that need to be fixed (Avramidis, 2005).

- **Continuing professional teacher development for inclusive education**

In 2006, SAQA registered a new programme - Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) with specialisation in inclusive education, to support and facilitate a move from the medical deficit model to an inclusive model. The ACE comprised different modules that teachers could choose from depending on their goals for professional development (DoE, 2008). To aid the transition to an inclusive system, as specified in the EWP6 the ACE was one choice teachers had to improve their skills and educator status while also contributing to building an inclusive culture in schools (Ebersöhn et al., 2010). According to the CHE (2010), 2 408 teachers obtained the ACE in inclusive education at 11 of the 24 Higher Education Institutions. In addition to the ACE as a

stand-alone programme, most universities have included modules that address Special Needs Education in undergraduate studies. Most universities offer special needs education qualifications, distance education programmes, and postgraduate level specialisations (Mutereko, 2013). However, the CHE (2010) revealed that the ACE programme's contents may not have been enough to address pedagogies, methods and techniques for meeting various learning requirements since teachers still felt that they were not adequately equipped to assist learners with barriers. Teachers do not believe that FSSs are adequately resourced to cater for diverse learning requirements (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). According to Conway (2017), teachers still favour referring learners for specialised intervention when they encounter learning difficulties or breakdowns. It seems like teachers have not reached a point where they ensure that the learner remains in the inclusive classroom and receives assistance. The terminology used during the medical deficit model era has been changed, but the support strategy has often been retained (Mahlo & Condy, 2016). The practice in FSS is mostly still based on the medical deficit model; learners with barriers are pulled out of the classroom activities and lessons for special support by the LSE (DBE, 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2006), similar to attending remedial classes offered by the remedial teacher. When a learner is at risk based on SIAS and is found to fall into one of the two SIAS levels 4 or 5, they will be placed in special schools (Du Plessis, 2013). The practice of the medical deficit model continues because members of the multidisciplinary teams who comprise the ESS in the South African setting are still educated in a primarily medical paradigm and struggle to adapt to an ecosystemic or even bio-ecological style of thinking (Hay, 2012). Shani and Hebel (2016) posit that teachers' stress has decreased, and their resistance to inclusive practices has decreased due to their participation in CPTD. Inclusive education would be difficult to implement without continuous education and training for teachers. This is because more training in inclusive policies and abilities results in more favourable and positive opinions or attitudes among teachers (Shani & Hebel, 2016). Still, after 15 years of implementing the CPTD, the system fails many learners (DBE, 2012).

3.4.5.1.2 Addressing challenges of CPTD for inclusive education

At an increasing rate, many learners are being placed in special schools, even though they might succeed at an ordinary school (Conway, 2017; Sharma & Loreman, 2013). District support services do not provide enough assistance to teachers to assist them in changing techniques and implementing assessment and curriculum differentiation. Many subject advisers lack an understanding of multi-level teaching (Nel et al., 2013), and the SBST is also inadequate and not capacitated to support teachers (VVOB South Africa, 2016). To address the challenges mentioned above, on April 19, 2016, SACE and the VVOB South Africa hosted their inaugural professional seminar, which was attended by over 70 delegates to deliberate on teacher

professional development for inclusive education and explore how teacher professional development should implement IE successfully.

The following were the most significant points of discussion:

The delegates acknowledged a lack of awareness and misconceptions within the educational system concerning inclusive education. Many teachers see inclusive education as a specialist-only issue and are concerned that learning results may suffer due to their incapacity to support learners with barriers. Human Rights Watch (2019) discovered that South African teachers lack training in inclusive education techniques and the breadth of impairments that learners may present. They lack information and practical training regarding learners' requirements due to their impairments. But it is asserted that teachers in ordinary schools are not properly prepared or competent to teach learners with barriers (Human Rights Watch, 2019). According to some, teachers' lack of awareness and practical skills for adapting to learners' impairments creates a barrier for learners with disabilities who need specialised help. (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Thus, it was suggested that to enhance the educational system and fulfil the goals of inclusive education, it was necessary to guarantee that teachers are prepared with skills that will allow them to help and accommodate learners with a variety of needs in their classrooms (DBE, 2015).

3.4.5.2 Professional learning communities (PLC)

The ISPFTED describes PLCs as tools for strengthening teachers' inclusive teaching practices and overcoming pedagogical hurdles (DBE, 2011). Educators in a PLC often get together to work on projects and share expertise to improve teaching skills and academic achievement (Welsh Government Hwb Team, 2013). The phrase also refers to educational institutions or colleges that foster professional growth via small group cooperation (DBE, 2015a). The phrase is also used in schools or schools to collaborate with small groups to improve their professional growth (DBE, 2015a). According to Ntseto (2015), PLCs may be utilised as platforms for peer-learning in inclusive education involving teachers from full-service and neighbouring schools. The Welsh Government Hwb Team (2013) recommended that teachers be made aware of the need to engage in PLCs to share knowledge regarding curricular diversification by studying tactics and ideas related to aiding learners with obstacles during pre- and in-service teacher training.

While there are numerous PLCs, they are not as widespread as they could be throughout all schools and the system. DBE (2015a) recommends assisting districts and individual teachers in informing and developing learning groups where they do not exist. Such projects would have a

better chance of succeeding if they aim to model and provide long-term support for desired growth strategies and development they promote.

3.4.5.3 The on-site/offsite debate

A considerable debate in the literature has been about offsite teacher professional development activities (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013; De Clercq & Shalem, 2014). Such programmes are often facilitated by officials from the local education district or other experts, conducted at venues outside the school and mostly packaged as workshops, seminars or short courses. These district-based teacher development programmes have been lauded for their qualities, which include excellent platforms for distributing knowledge and providing opportunities for teachers to build intellectual communities for exchanging practise outside of their schools (Lieberman, 1995; Leu, 2004). An offsite induction programme involving several institutions, like the cases of China (Shanghai) and France, for example, was reported to be useful in exposing early career teachers to varied practices through sharing practices (Wong, 2004; Wong et al., 2005). Although effective sometimes, offsite training events are criticised for removing teachers from there and failing to prioritise the knowledge areas essential for effective professional practice (De Clercq & Phiri, 2013; De Clercq & Shalem, 2014). There is an obvious bias in the literature regarding school-based teacher professional development activities as they are argued to be highly effective in facilitating practice-wisdom development (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The most critical information for teaching or practical knowledge is incorporated into practice, and chances to reflect on experience are abundant (Wong et al., 2005).

According to Learning Portal (2021), seminars and single workshops are less practical than continuous support training. Knight (2007) agrees that support that currently shows significant potential in enhancing teaching is the ongoing and school-based. According to Makofane (2019) and Engelbrecht et al. (2015), teachers believe that offsite workshops, particularly for inclusive education, last too short to change negative perceptions among teachers in ordinary schools regarding including learners who have learning difficulties; this implies ongoing, and school-based measures may offer better support. Due to a lack of continuity, teachers also find it challenging to implement and reflect on learner support practices they have learnt during the offsite workshops and seminars. Conversely, Lewin et al. (2010) report that seminars and workshops for teachers have a significant benefit in implementing inclusive education. The study also reveals that if appropriately organised, workshops and seminars may assist teachers in achieving favourable results in terms of inclusive education. However, the problem is that many teachers believe these workshops are insufficient (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018) and that facilitators are not convincingly knowledgeable about inclusive education and learner support (Mfuthwana, 2016).

To determine if pre-and in-service has successfully prepared and capacitated teachers to be effective in their profession, let us explore whether support strategies have been implemented for teachers while waiting for DBST specialist intervention.

3.5 SUPPORT STRATEGIES THAT TEACHERS IMPLEMENT WHILE WAITING FOR DBST SPECIALIST INTERVENTION

In previous chapters of this study, the challenge with IE is that teachers, who are the main drivers of learner support, feel they are not capacitated to implement it effectively due to inadequacies in training and the support they receive. Policy stipulates that if the school cannot support a learner who encounters barriers to learning through the available resources, such a learner may be referred to the DBST for specialist intervention. However, the literature reveals that the waiting period between when a learner is referred to the DBST by the SBST and when the DBST implements specialist intervention is uncomfortably long. So while awaiting DBST intervention, teachers have to come up with support strategies that they have developed themselves to support these learners (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019). Some studies indicate that peer teaching, and one-to-one teaching are some methods teachers employ to assist learners in the meantime.

According to Schuetz et al. (2017), peer-teaching describes situations in which a learner is taught by a fellow learner who is not formally trained as a teacher. According to Chauke (2017), peer teaching means a learner who has mastered a concept helps by explaining it to those who are not yet competent. Although peer teaching is used a lot in institutes of higher learning (Corral, 2018; Tullis & Goldstone, 2020), Chauke (2017) posits it has also yielded several valuable benefits when applied in inclusive classrooms. Peer teaching may improve attitudes and provide a more customised and collaborative learning experience for learners, which can lead to greater accomplishment (Fink, 2020). For the teaching learner, the experience can deepen their understanding of the subject and impart confidence. One of the other support strategies that teachers utilise to support learners in inclusive classrooms is to provide one-on-one assistance, according to Nel et al. (2016). However, the CAPS (DBE,2011) limits them in terms of time since it stipulates how long the teacher must spend on each task (Booysen, 2018; Nel et al., 2016). Unfortunately, teachers are also frustrated by inadequate training and the support they receive; therefore, many do not know how they should support learners in their classrooms awaiting DBST intervention. A study by Nong (2020) reveals that teachers award learners' marks to progress them to other grades because of the provision of the progression policy. According to the progression policy, no learner should spend more than four years in one phase, and if a learner has repeated a grade, regardless of whether they match the qualifications for promotion or not, they must be advanced to the following grade (DBE, 2015b).

Policies (DBE 2014, 2001) prescribe that teacher be trained to manage cooperative learning and teaching in multi-level classrooms, so they may develop learners' strengths and abilities. Teachers are then trained to do this through pre-, and in-service development programmes like those mentioned in the text. After interrogating some of the relevant literature, one gets the sense that the pre-service academic programmes I reviewed (BEd and PGCE) provide an overview of inclusive education but might not be specific enough on how teachers can support learners waiting for specialist support from the DBST after referral. Regarding in-service teacher training, guidelines for the orientation programme (DBE, 2017) and other methods of training in-service teachers may greatly empower teachers for IE. However, there is a scarcity of details on how learner support may be effectively implemented to narrow the waiting period between when a learner is referred to the DBST by the SBST and when the DBST intervenes. Teachers today still often prefer the placement of learners at special schools instead of educating them in ordinary classrooms.

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter was dedicated to reviewing the literature on teacher training so the extent to which pre- and in-service training influences teachers' capacity to involve and assist learners with learning barriers may be measured. Based on the discussions, teacher training equips teachers with sound educational practices and skills to cater for the increasing demands of the teaching profession. Teacher training and development have the potential to cause teachers to flourish in the profession if the challenges identified were to be addressed.

CHAPTER 4: THE PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY – AND PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is a strategy the researcher employs to systematically design a study and the way the researcher ensures the validity and reliability of the findings that address the research aims and objectives (Jansen & Warren, 2020). It is the procedure by which researchers describe, explain and predict phenomena (Goundar, 2012). Research methodology encompasses the research paradigm, approach and design. In this chapter, the research methodology, procedure and criteria for the selection of participants, and data generation instruments are outlined. Additionally, the quality criteria adhered to within this study are discussed before ethical considerations, which conclude the chapter.

4.1.1 The study's primary goal

This study explores how teachers' capacity to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention can be developed. These goals, which were established by the research questions, served as my guide in realising the goal of this study:

- Exploring the experiences of teachers awaiting support from the DBST.
- Determine what strategies teachers currently use and what strategies they could develop to help themselves become more capable of providing interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention.
- Develop guidelines from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Tan (2018) describes research methodology as a set of logical processes from formulating a research problem to completing the study. It is the research paradigm, approach, design, methods, techniques and processes used by a researcher to explore a phenomenon by bringing the unknown to the known. The research paradigm is discussed first.

4.2.1 Research paradigm

American philosopher Thomas Kuhn first used the word "paradigm" to describe a "philosophical method of thought" in 1962 (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Orman (2016), Thomas Kuhn created the term to refer to shared views, attitudes and assumptions about the nature and conduct

of research that a community of researchers share. According to Kuhn (in Orman, 2016), a paradigm is an integrated group of important concepts, factors, and problems linked to suitable methodological techniques and instruments. Thus, a paradigm denotes a structure, pattern, system or framework of scientific and academic concepts, hypotheses and values. According to Mertens (2007), paradigms impact how knowledge is researched and understood in different fields. Thus, paradigms are crucial to influencing what should be investigated, how it should be examined, and how academics should interpret the study's results in a particular subject (Taylor & Medina, 2013). In a previous chapter, I indicated this study is rooted in an emancipatory paradigm.

The emancipatory paradigm's main goal is to provide study participants with the capacity to make decisions that will help disadvantaged people (Noel, 2016). Groat and Wang (cited in Noel, 2016), allude that the main reason for this paradigm's emergence was a growing discomfort with the dominant research paradigms and methods. The emancipatory paradigm attempts to unravel politics and practices undermining human freedom (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). Noel (2016) avers that the emancipatory paradigm is a knowledge-producing process that benefits disadvantaged people by giving attention to social challenges and ensuring that the contributions of marginalised individuals are heard (Weaver & Olson, 2006). The lives and experiences of disadvantaged groups, such as women, minorities of a certain race or ethnicity, and people living with disabilities, are prioritised (Romm, 2015).

The emancipatory paradigm is suited for this study because, first, Participatory Action Research (PAR) is emancipatory (Reason, 2008); second, teachers selected to participate as co-researchers may play a role in creating knowledge (Noel, 2016) that will empower them to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention. The co-researchers will hopefully own the project and continue applying guidelines developed long after the study has ended. The assumptions about the study's ontology, epistemology and axiology are discussed hereafter.

4.2.1.1 Ontology

"The study of being" is how Smith (2003) defines ontology. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), an ontology raises fundamental concerns concerning reality and the character of the human being in the world. The constant ontological debate is whether reality exists independently of human consciousness and experiences or whether reality exists within our perception and only through experience (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Within an emancipatory paradigm, the ontological assumption is that different realities exist (Groat & Wang, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and that knowledge is not just formed by elite researchers or the dominant group (Groat & Wang, 2001). In this study, participants are given an equitable opportunity to create knowledge, research actively, and design rather than be relegated to a more passive role of consuming knowledge

they have not contributed to (Noel, 2016). I will ensure that all participants have an equal voice in expressing and creating their reality (Noel, 2016).

4.2.1.2 Epistemology

While ontological assumptions address the nature of reality, epistemology concerns how things may be known and how facts, truths, or physical laws, if they exist, can be revealed and disclosed (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). Epistemology concerns how knowledge is acquired and what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a discipline (Walliman, 2016). I align myself with the emancipatory epistemological stance. I assume that as the researcher, I am interactively linked with the investigated phenomenon about my values, which inevitably influences this study (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Knowledge is a power source and comprises social relations and participants' lived experiences interpreted from their social setting (Aliyu et al., 2015). Therefore, my study reveals epistemology by interacting with teachers who aim to support learners daily while awaiting support from the DBST. Last, the axiology component of the research paradigm is discussed.

4.2.1.3 Axiology

Axiology is a collection of convictions about the significance of morals and values in scientific study (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019) and what we believe to be true.This branch of philosophy, known as axiology, investigates the essence of value and seeks to determine what is inherently attractive. A research paradigm's axiological perspective aims to show consistency, reliability, or otherwise rebuilding or extending accepted theories or constructions (Aliyu et al., 2015). In the case of a transformative or emancipatory paradigm, the axiological assumption is that while conducting research aimed at increasing social justice, respecting the norms and cultural histories of interactions is essential (Mertens, 2015). Knowing how to thrive in a society with a balance of hierarchy, cooperation and liberty is an aim, and it is intrinsically valuable (Aliyu et al., 2015). Therefore, in this study, we assume the axiological stance that research must begin with a value perspective and that some positions are correct while others are incorrect (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). We maintain cultural competency in understanding the implications of power differentials faced by the co-researchers regarding access to resources for improving the quality of life (Mertens, 2010). Now that it has been stated that this study is based on the emancipatory paradigm, the research approach is discussed.

4.2.2 Research approach

According to Zikmund et al. (2009), a research approach comprises a strategy that details processes with techniques for collecting and analysing data. There are three research approaches that researchers may choose from for their studies - quantitative, qualitative and the mixed approach. The quantitative approach focuses mainly on gathering and analysing numerical

data (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). It may look for patterns and averages, formulate hypotheses, assess causal relationships, and extrapolate results to larger groups (Grover, 2015). Quantitative research evaluates objective hypotheses by comparing variables (Creswell, 2014b). The compared variables may then be determined using apparatuses, and then analysing that numerical data statistically becomes possible (Maree & Pietersen, 2019a). Quantitative research is the inverse of qualitative research, which comprises gathering and studying non-numerical information, including text, video and audio (Creswell, 2014b). The qualitative approach is concerned with comprehensively understanding a phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014), a qualitative approach has two distinguishing features; first, it focuses on a phenomenon occurring in the participants' natural settings. Second, it studies the phenomenon in all its complexities. Researchers recognise that the phenomena they research have several aspects (Mertens, 2010) and largely depend on the participants' interpretation and articulation.

Using different designs that may include philosophical presumptions and theoretical frameworks, mixed methods research is an enquiry approach that entails collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, combining the two types of data, and conducting the study. The underlying tenet of this research approach is that using both qualitative and quantitative approaches together result in a more thorough understanding of a studied topic than using either approach alone (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maree & Pietersen, 2019a).

In this study, we will use the qualitative approach to research. Participants will interpret and identify the challenges they encounter while supporting learners awaiting the DBST intervention, developing an interim support plan, and deciding how the knowledge created through the collaborative research process will be distributed. This study used the qualitative approach with a PAR design.

4.2.3 Research design

According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), the research design determines the process for gathering the necessary data, the techniques to be used to gather and analyse this data, and how this will answer the research question. PAR was selected as the research design for this study. PAR is one genre of action research (Koekemoer, 2016; Mertler, 2020). Action research is concerned with organisational transformation and empowerment of organisational members and adds to scientific information. This definition covers the critical tenets of action research: i) Engagement in an unfolding pattern of handling a practical issue, where data shifts because of what is stated, done or not done, and where nothing can be predicted or controlled; ii) Action research occurs in a particular context. Therefore, it is critical that the context within which the action research takes place be borne in mind throughout the research process; iii) During action

research, the relationship between researchers and system participants must shift. To build and manage partnerships, similar goals, cooperative activity, trust building, developing a common language, and joint reflection must be utilised; iv) Action research inspires action and produces new ideas, so tracking the project's progress across collaborative cycles is critical; v) Last but not least, action research yields two results: improved organisational practice and self-help capacities - and useful theory developed via action and inquiry (Coghlan & Shani, 2018).

As a subfield of action research, PAR stresses co-learning, involvement and organisational change as part of a continuous learning process. So, it is not just another research method (Baum et al., 2006); it is a liberatory, cyclical process that focuses on change, is context-specific, and emphasises collaboration for personal or collective change. In PAR, participants work together to examine important parts of her/his life and get a deeper understanding of these (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). PAR aims to improve the existing conditions of the community by breaking down societal boundaries and barriers (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002).

Because teachers will be empowered by participating in this research, PAR is regarded as relevant, especially in ensuring the continued participation of learners with barriers to educational activities. This may bridge the time lapse between referral and the DBST intervention - if left unattended, this becomes a barrier to be overcome (Engelbrecht et al., 2013). This study used plan-act-observe-and-reflect cycles of iterative action research to carry out the PAR process. Each cycle addressed a secondary question of the research.

According to Bhattacherjee (2012), a research design must comprise at least three processes: the sampling process, the data generation process, analysis and interpretation of data.

4.2.3.1 Selection of participants

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014) and Maree and Pietersen (2019b), sampling techniques fall under two headings: probability and non-probability. The probability approach is supported by randomness and probability theory, unlike non-probability methods. Probability samples meet the criteria for generalising to the population using probability theory. So, each component of a population stands the possibility of selection, and the selection process is arbitrary (Maree & Pietersen, 2019b). When non-probability techniques are used, the goal is typically to investigate phenomena in-depth (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). To better understand this phenomenon, the qualitative researcher chooses people and locations for data gathering on purpose (Maree & Pietersen, 2019b). There are four non-probability methods, according to Maree and Pietersen (2019b), and those are:

4.2.3.1.1 Convenience sampling

Sampling is referred to as convenience sampling when demographic components are chosen because they are readily and conveniently accessible (Maree & Pietersen, 2019b). According to Etikan et al. (2016), members of the target population who match certain practical requirements, such as being available at a given time, being nearby, being simple to reach, or being eager to participate, are included in the research using convenience sampling. This sampling is typically low-cost, quick and readily available to participants (Sedgwick, 2013; Sharma, 2017). The limitation of convenience and other non-probability sampling methods is that the sample may not represent the population, and therefore, the result cannot be reliably generalised, which threatens the external validity of the results (Maree & Pietersen, 2019b; Sedgwick, 2013). Another method of non-probability sampling is the snowball method. Unlike convenience sampling, the snowballing method is normally selected when the population is not easily accessible to the researcher or where the study focuses on a homogenous group of individuals (Bakkalbasioglu, 2020).

4.2.3.1.2 Snowball sampling

The following is the definition of the snowball sampling procedure: a random sample of people is chosen from a limited population. Each recruited member is then requested to recommend future participants who meet the set criteria; sampling continues until the desired sample size is obtained (Maree & Pietersen, 2019b; Naderifar et al., 2017).

4.2.3.1.3 Quota sampling

Quota sampling is especially beneficial when a probability sample cannot be obtained, but a sample representative of the community being researched is desired (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Sharma, 2017). The sample population is picked based on specified qualities and attributes of the population's members (Bhasin, 2020). The quota sampling approach enhances the representation of certain strata (groups) within the population while ensuring that they are not over represented (Sharma, 2017).

4.2.3.1.4 Purposive sampling

I selected participants for this research using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a component of non-probability sampling where the researcher consciously decides who the sample needs to include (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). To draw a purposive sample would be because the participants exhibit qualities that the researcher values (Maree & Pietersen, 2019b). I had specific characteristics in mind that the project group needed to co-research with

me, so I used this method to recruit them (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). For this study, participants selected all satisfied these criteria:

- Qualified educators working full-time at a school in the Sedibeng West District of Gauteng Province,
- Have experience with referring a learner for SBST intervention, and
- Be willing to participate voluntarily in this study.

I required approximately six participants/co-researchers, so I worked with the school's office administrator as a gatekeeper to obtain entry to the school and recruit participants. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (as cited by Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), a gatekeeper has an official or unofficial function at the research site, allows admission to a site, and helps researchers discover individuals suitable for the study. Figure 4.1 below is the poster I used to recruit participants with the help of the gatekeeper.

Figure 0-1: Participants' recruitment poster

We successfully recruited six participants who met the set criteria; their biographical information is detailed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 0-1: Biographical information of the project group/ participants

Participant	Gender	Position	Years at a FSS	Years as a teacher	Qualifications	Training on learner support
P1	Male	Head of Department	8	20	BEd Hons	Yes
P2	Female	Learning support educator	1	6	BEd Hons	Yes
P3	Female	Teacher	5	7	PGCE	No
P4	Female	Teacher	2	2	BEd	Yes
P5	Male	Teacher	5	15	BEd	Yes
P6	Female	Teacher	9	9	BEd Hons	No
P7	Male	Teacher	2	2	BEd	No

4.2.4 Data generation

For data generation, we used qualitative, participatory methods such as collages, reflective diaries, project group discussions and The World Café. The PAR process unfolded as described in Table 4.2 below – and discussed below:

Table 0-2: The PAR process

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE 1 Building a collage to answer the secondary question of: What are the experiences of teachers who are expecting DBST support?		
Phase	**Activity**	**Objective**
PLAN	During this phase, we agreed to subdivide the question into three sub-questions: What is working, and what are the teachers' emotions and experiences? We also agreed on the steps we would follow to construct the collage (cf. 4.2.4.1.1).	Explore teachers' experiences awaiting support from the DBST by constructing a collage.
OBSERVE	During the observation phase, the participants had to define the status quo in their classrooms. Participants discussed and agreed on the keywords that represent their discussions (cf. 4.2.4.1.2).	
ACT	Act - construct the collage.	
REFLECT	Reflect on the collage construction process and suggest ways to improve on the process.	
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE 2 **What strategies do teachers currently utilise, and could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?**		
Phase	**Activity**	**Objective**
PLAN	We planned to break the cycle into two groups/sections: In the first segment, the sub-question was addressed: What strategies do teachers currently utilise interim support to learners awaiting the DBST intervention? The second section answered the question: The second sub-question was: What strategies could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?	Determine strategies teachers currently utilise and could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention.
OBSERVE and ACT	Discussions were held to answer the two questions agreed-upon (cf. 4.2.4.3.2).	

REFLECT	Reflect on the project group discussions and suggest ways to improve on the process.	

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE 3 **What guidelines can be developed from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention?**		
Phase	**Activity**	**Objective**
PLAN	To have two questions answered during this cycle: What should be done, which is not done, to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention? Guidelines/Recommendations - how should it be done?	Guidelines were developed from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention.
ACT	Steps 1 to 5 were carried out as detailed in 4.2.4.4 above.	
OBSERVE	Documenting the results of action.	
REFLECT	We engaged in a collaborative reflection to generalise what we have learnt and accomplished from the activities we performed.	

4.2.4 Collages

A collage is derived from the French term "coller," which means cutting and pasting materials on a flat surface (Butler – Kisber & Poldma, 2010; Gerstenblatt, 2013). Collage is a mixed media technique that allows you to express ideas challenging to describe in words (Culshaw, 2019; Ramadhaniar & Lukito, 2020). According to Brenson (1989), two cubist artists, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso are credited with inventing the *collage* in 1912. They became dissatisfied with traditional art methods and experimented with glueing coloured and printed pieces of paper onto their works. Since then, collage production has evolved from its origins in the realm of craft to its current state as an art form (Caxaj, 2015). This genre of art allows the artist to put together pieces of materials (photographs, words, objects, etc.) to create a new reality or augment an existing one

(Mitchell et al., 2017). The collage approach has become a popular creative form in qualitative research due to its simplicity of usage and variety (Caxaj, 2015); it has thus become popular among qualitative researchers when studying abstract social concepts (Mitchell et al., 2017; Mulholland & O'Connor, 2016).

I have elected collage creation as one of the data-generating methods for this study because this method will allow researchers to express through pictures the experiences and emotions they may find challenging to vocalise. In Roberts and Woods' (2018) opinion, collage can be a method for facilitating the creation of new ideas. Visual research approaches allow participants to slow down and be present, diving deeper into their unique experiences and feelings (Roberts & Woods, 2018; Godinho et al., 2016). Mitchell et al. (2017) and Culshaw (2019) explain visual approaches such as collages by arguing we live in an era of ocular centrism. Pictures are a significant part of our everyday lives and impact how we view ourselves and others.

Visual research techniques provide an alternate approach to portraying the nuances of experience, profound sentiments, and understandings in innovative, non-linear ways (Roberts & Woods, 2018). Arts-based techniques can enable new things to be communicated or the same things to be presented in new ways. Others contend there are instances when words are insufficient (Culshaw, 2019). Collage-making enables contemplation and visual reconstruction of an event, making it more familiar and, ideally, intelligible. Making a collage helps participants access words in a new way. Some proponents claim that an arts-based approach can effectively provoke topics of discussion from participants. (Haney et al., 2004). However, some point to the method's non-linguistic, non-linear nature as a significant element while acknowledging the necessity of asking participants later to describe their completed collage in words (Roberts & Woods, 2018).

Before the data generation process commenced, we held a welcoming session through WhatsApp video-calling. During the call, I welcomed and thanked the teachers for agreeing to conduct this study with me. I then explained the purpose of this study and the PAR concept. A project group must have a firm grasp of the PAR process since the technique involves participants acting as a team to attain developmental goals by developing knowledge and skills via action and critical reflection (Luthuli & Wood, 2020). I reviewed the informed consent with them again and allowed co-researchers to ask questions that needed clarity regarding informed consent. At this stage, the approvals from the EduRec Ethics committee - attached as Addendum D and GDE's approval attached as Addendum E were granted, but the participants had not yet signed the informed permission. Every participant signed the informed consent/permission after the welcoming session during our first session, which is attached as Addendum A.

The four stages of the action research cycle were included in making the collages: plan – act – observe - reflect (Kemmis et al., 2014). The secondary question answered through this process was: What are teachers' experiences awaiting support from the DBST?

Resources we needed and provided for this process were:

Marking pens and an A3 chart for the brainstorming session, A4 paper for the draft in words before the collection of pictures (cf. picture 4.1), magazines, newspapers, colour printer, laptop, scissors and glue.

4.2.4.1.1 Plan

We held our first meeting at the school. One metre of social distancing was observed per Covid-19 protocol; we sanitised our hands regularly and kept our masks on throughout the meeting. We were all vaccinated.

I opened the meeting by explaining to the participants the objective of this cycle to answer the secondary question of the study stated above through collage construction. We then agreed that to simplify the process, three sub-questions must be added to the question:

- Describe the situation in your classroom. When answering this question, participants were expected to describe the status quo regarding the classroom status, the DBST support and the school-based support.
- The second question was: what is already working regarding your intervention strategies?
- The participants planned to discuss their emotions and thoughts when they supported learners.

We agreed on the steps we would follow to construct the collage. The steps were adapted from Gerstenblatt (2013):

Step 1: Participants would discuss and agree on crucial words representing their thoughts and answers to the agreed-upon sub-questions.

Step 2: Produce a draft in words of what later became the collage.

Step 3: Cut pictures representing the magazines' draft and print some online.

Step 4: Glue pictures on a chart.

Step 5: Discuss the collage.

4.2.4.1.2 Act

After agreeing on the plan, we sat down together; there were six of us on that day because one participant did not show up, with no apology. She later told me she could no longer participate in the study, and I told her she was welcome to withdraw. Per the participant information and consent, participants may exit the research at any time without consequence or prejudice.

The five participants there spoke about their classes' current conditions and the help they got from the DBST and the SBST; also what was already working regarding their intervention strategies, emotions, and thoughts as they support learners awaiting DBST intervention. We then agreed on keywords representing their thoughts and answers to the agreed-upon sub-questions. My role during this process was to take notes. Through agreeing upon and documenting keywords, we produced a draft document to guide us on what pictures to collect to create the collage.

Based on the draft, every participant collected pictures (step 3 of the planning stage) representing the draft, and they glued them on the chart (step 4). The result thereof was the collage attached (Addendum H). Following the collage construction, a discussion was held and recorded, explaining what the collage represented (step 5). The conversations were saved on a memory stick and submitted to the supervisor with the report. All discussions were transcribed verbatim and attached as Addendum G.

4.2.4.1.3 Observe

According to Pain et al. (2018), "action" should come with monitoring and observing the results. According to Pardede (2019), the observation stage entails monitoring and evaluating the effects of the action stage. We all observed the finished product during this stage, which was not a distinctive/stand-alone stage but intertwined with the act stage (Addendum H). We discussed the experiences, emotions and thoughts that the collage represented. This process then led to the reflecting stage, which is discussed next.

4.2.4.1.4 Reflect

Reflection is the final stage in which the group introspectively analysed how the process unfolded, synthesised and interpreted thoughts and expressions, and drew conclusions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) about the final product and suggested possible ways of moving forward. Dependent on the reflection results, a new cycle of preparation, execution, observation, and reflection is typically started (Maxwell, 2003). In this study, we agreed that participants would

document their reflections in their reflective journals and email them, so I could compile one document for the reflections on collage creation (see Addendum G).

4.2.4.2 Reflective diaries

We used reflective diaries to record our journey through the PAR cycles. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), researchers use reflective diaries to record significant occurrences and learn what is worth noting at every stage. Reflective diaries, also known as learning journals, research journals, or logbooks, are detailed field notes kept by researchers during the study and utilised by participants for clarification, allowing them to comprehend better their unique and personal experiences (Hojeij et al., 2021). Reflective journaling is a method of recording and evaluating experiences in a specified manner to promote reflective thinking and learning (Kallarackar &Thomas, 2020).

An advantage of using reflective diaries is that I could capture the exact words of the co-researchers. The participants could complete the diaries whenever convenient (Joubert, 2013). The downside may be that not everyone is equally competent in expressing oneself via writing (O'Connell & Dyment, 2011). To mitigate that limitation, participants were allowed to record their reflections. Diaries may not be thorough or include enough information to be properly interpreted. This limitation was overcome by regularly encouraging my study partners to finish the diaries and gather data until data saturation was achieved.

A reliable information source and method for qualitative research is keeping a reflective journal (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Researchers are advised by Whitehead and McNiff (2006) to have their study subjects maintain reflective diaries. They record occasions where they learnt something new, reflect on their learning, and comment on the potential importance of recorded events, observations or perceptions. Reflective journals may be kept using a variety of methodologies, including written, spoken, and perceived data, according to Whitehead and McNiff (2006). According to Joubert (2013), written reflections are more convenient because they are ready for use in data analysis, and there is no need to transcribe. In this study, researchers had the option to either write or voice record their reflections depending on what was convenient to them. I transcribed verbal recordings to prepare for data analysis. Project group discussions and a World Café were utilised as data production and approach in addition to collage and reflective journals; the two strategies are explained below.

4.2.4.3 Project group discussions

In literature, for a discussion method, a researcher purposefully gathers a group of individuals (six to eight). These individuals share specific characteristics to deliberate on an issue or topic intending to elicit the members' experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions via controlled

interactions, and are called focus group discussions/interviews or project group discussions (Nyumba et al., 2018; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). The term "project group discussions" will be used in this study. Project group discussions focused on answering the secondary question - What strategies do teachers currently utilise, and could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention? Denscombe (2010) and Elman et al. (2020) further describe a project group as a method of generating data in qualitative research gathered by a qualified moderator (the researcher) to examine opinions, sentiments, and views on a subject. According to Watson et al. (2015), project groups are generally categorised as clinical, experiential or exploratory. Clinical project groups are often employed in motivational research investigations, which have as their main goals the explanation of beliefs, emotions, and behaviours and the elucidation of motivations for preferences. Experiential project groups are usually used to corroborate models, hypotheses, or theories generated by the researcher during prior research activities or to triangulate data gathered through surveys and interviews. Clinical and experiential activities differ from exploratory project groups because their purpose is about generating, gathering, recognising, determining and elucidating thoughts (Fern, 2001). We elected to embark on an exploratory project group discussions. An exploratory project group allowed us to uncover participants' different thoughts, not just those they have in common (Elman et al., 2020). Exploratory interactions would be beneficial in broadening the range of reactions, awakening forgotten aspects of experience, and removing inhibitions that would otherwise prevent members from sharing information (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). Proponents of project group discussions argue that conversations among project teams create data-rich information challenging to get using conventional research methods (Fetters, 2016). However, some writers have raised concerns that the size of focus groups is too small for results to be generalised and that some participants may not voice their true opinions due to group influence (Vicsek, 2010). Because participants in a project group are affected by others, as they would be in real life, Krueger and Casey (2009) contend that a project group setting is more natural than an individual interview. Project group discussions unfolded in the following way:

4.2.4.3.1 Plan

We divided this session into two parts when we started this cycle. In the first segment, we addressed the following related question: What strategies do teachers currently utilise to provide interim support to learners awaiting the DBST intervention? The second section responded to the second sub-question: What strategies could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?

4.2.4.3.2 Act and Observe

The discussions commenced immediately after the planning; there was no observable moment when participants might have been observing strategies that the teachers currently utilise to provide interim support to learners awaiting the DBST intervention. Therefore, I concluded that these two stages occur simultaneously. Discussions were transcribed verbatim and attached as Addendum G. During the talks, it emerged that teachers provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention through:

- scaffolding;
- making lessons more practical;
- partnering;
- workbooks according to learners' level of competence;
- re-teaching;
- babysitting; and
- pull-out classes.

When the second sub-question was answered during the discussions, teachers indicated that strategies that could be developed to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention are:

- build rapport with parents;
- develop lay counselling skills;
- enrol in short courses to develop skills to assist learners who encounter academic obstacles (personal and professional development); and
- collaboration among co-workers.

4.2.4.3.3 Reflect

Participants had the opportunity to consider the process after the conversations, as we decided in the previous cycle. Reflections for project group discussions are attached as part of Addendum G.

4.2.4.4 World Café

The World Café arose through local talks with various people worldwide; however, its ideas were not tested or altered until Juanita Brown compiled the work during her PhD studies at Fielding Graduate University in 2001 (Hurley, 2008). The World Café, according to Hurley (2008) and

World Café (2017) is an innovative technique for hosting and collecting collaborative dialogues about important issues. The approach is intended to elicit and make a group's collective intelligence visible, enhancing members' ability to develop shared meaning and new knowledge and stimulating creativity across organisational, social, and cultural barriers that might otherwise prevent cooperation. Löhr et al. (2020) define it as a strategy for strategic dialogue, multi-stakeholder involvement, intergenerational collaboration and cooperative action being enthusiastically adopted by people from all walks of life working to catalyse positive change.

The World Café is a method for hosting a group dialogue around "questions that matter." Small groups of four to five participants think and discuss topics of interest in a comfortable and welcoming café by walking between groups and tables at regular intervals to build on and connect previously spoken ideas in changing debate rounds (World Café, 2018).

World Cafés are social learning settings that foster collective knowledge, develop creative ideas and insights, and motivate people to see and embrace new possibilities (Prewitt, 2011). The World Café approach is suitable for gathering a significant number of rich data in a short period since it integrates qualitative data collection methods, including interviews, drawings, narratives, and reflection (The World Café, 2017). It is a brainstorming tool that produces thoughts and observations via group discussions, information exchange, and possible courses of action (The World Café, 2017).

World Café is ordinarily founded on these standards:

- providing context;
- establishing a welcoming environment;
- urging active engagement from everyone while allowing for passive participation;
- integrating different viewpoints; and
- collectively listening for patterns and insights (Lewis, 2016; Ropes et al, 2020; World Café, 2017).

To carry out a World Café, the participants were divided into two groups of three and two. The questions guided the discussions:

Question 1: What do teachers suggest should be done, which is not done to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention?

Question 2: Guidelines/Recommendations – how should it be done?

This was to answer the secondary question: What recommendations may be made, given the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention?

The World Café unfolded in five steps as stated below:

Step 1 - Setting the Context

The World Café (2015) indicates that for a World Café model to be effective, facilitators first ought to create a "special" environment that encourages discussion. To set the context, I arranged the setting in a café form; tables were covered with tablecloths at the centre of both tables. I put a small bouquet of flowers, and drinks were provided. I then placed three chairs per table. I provided pens, coloured board markers, A3 size charts for taking notes and an adhesive. I also ensured that participants sat one metre apart and that there were sanitisers on both tables.

Step - 2 Welcome and Introduction

Having set the setting, I welcomed all the participants and showed them to their tables. When everyone was seated, I explained the World Café process then invited the participants to plan how we would conduct the discussion to suit us. This process was according to the results of the first and second cycles, so we agreed that we should start by reading the findings of the study so far (cf. 5.2). Then, each participant would sign a declaration that the findings are true reflections of the discussions we had. Member checking declarations are attached and labelled as Addendum F. We agreed that after signing the declarations, each group would start with their discussions to answer the agreed-upon sub-questions. There were two tables and two questions; the second question was built on the first, so the plan was for both groups to answer the first question first and write down their answers on the A3 chart provided. Then two members from each group would switch tables to see the other team's answers, add on to those, switch again until we reached data saturation, and answer the second question following the same process.

Each session of table conversation took about twenty minutes per the guidelines of World Café by The World Café (2015). Upon completing the initial round of conversation, the table host remained at the table since the role of the table host was to welcome participants to the table, summarise the discussion question, and summarise major concepts discussed at the table by earlier guests. At the conclusion of the exercise, the host gave a summary of the topics raised at his/her table (Silva & Guenther, 2018). Therefore, the table host remained at the table while others (travellers) switched as they carried key ideas, themes and questions into their new conversations.

Step - 3 Small Group Round

This is the "Act" stage of the cycle. After the planning stage (Step 2 - Welcome and Introduction), we commenced by taking turns reading the study's findings so far (cf. 5.2). Then, each participant signed a declaration that the finding was a true reflection of the discussions. Having finalised the findings of cycles one and two, we began with the World Café. At each table, we had the first question to answer. Both groups were given 20 minutes to answer the question. I was the timekeeper during these discussions. After the 20 minutes had lapsed, I notified the participants and asked them to switch tables leaving only the table host. The table host was given 3-5 minutes to summarise key ideas and prepare for the next group. They were given another 3-5 minutes to welcome participants to the table and provide the travellers with a summary of the key ideas. We followed the same process until we reached data saturation after three rounds of conversations. The table hosts could then share the discussion's summarised ideas from his/her table (Silva & Guenther, 2018). Following next was the "harvesting" step.

All the discussions on both tables were recorded, transcribed and attached as Addendum G.

Step 4 - Harvest

To finalise the phase of answering the first sub-question, which is: What should be done, which is not done currently to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention? We converged and allowed the two table hosts to present the discussion points from their respective tables. We then consolidated the discussions to form one answer to the question discussed (Ropes et al., 2020).

When harvesting for the first question was concluded, we each reflected on the process, and based on the reflections, we agreed that we should switch members to create a group for the next session. During the first session, the groups were:

Group 1: P1, P3 and P4 (table host) and Group 2: P2, P6 and P5 (table host).

For the second section, we agreed that groups would be composed: of Group 1: P1, P5 and P2 (table host) and Group 2: P4, P6 and P3 (table host).

The process then started again as described above, this time answering the question: How should it be done? The harvesting step in this phase resulted in the production of guidelines (see Chapter 6).

Step 5 - Reflect

At the end of this cycle, we engaged in a collaborative reflection to generalise what we learnt and accomplished from our activities (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). Our reflections on the World Café process were recorded and transcribed. Participants also reflected individually on the intervention strategies they have identified and deliberated on their relevance, practicability and success.

My role during the world café discussions was to explain to the co-researchers how the world café method works, to facilitate the formation of the two groups of three, I recorded the conversations and made sure that participants kept to the allocated time. One participant who resigned from the was substituted so there were six participant during the world café. I did not participate in world café discussions, I only played a role as a facilitator.

4.2.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative data analysis tries to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data (Creswell, 2014a) based on the philosophy that there exist socially constructed multiple realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and that truth and reality are created, not discovered. Realities are subject to the experiences and interpretations of those involved (Mashau, 2019). In PAR, data analysis is ongoing and iterative throughout the project group's entire research process through critical reflection (Kemmis et al., 2014). Data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are all linked, not just a sequence of procedures; data were analysed after each cycle to influence the next cycle. Throughout the cycles, themes and sub-themes were organised according to the thematic approach (Mauldin, 2020). Thematic analysis is a technique for systematically identifying, categorising and analysing meaning patterns (themes) in a dataset that enables the researcher to perceive and understand similar meanings and experiences by concentrating on meaning across that data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It focuses more on the qualitative characteristics of the material under consideration and not merely on locating different meanings and experiences only present in a single data piece (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2012) claim that theme analysis is identifying and making sense of similarities in how a subject is addressed or written about. It is a method for capturing the complexity of meaning within a textual data set often employed in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2012). Throughout the analysis process, I was cognisant of the fact that analysing data takes a long time since it involves a continuous coding process throughout the analysis, which necessitates examining the complete data repeatedly, looking for a pattern and its interpretation (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). We analysed each cycle before moving to the next, which made the process less complicated. The themes that emerged during cycles one and two were combined to avoid repetition.

There are several methods for theme analysis (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). However, because of this variability, some people are confused about thematic analysis, especially how it varies from qualitative content analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Researchers may use either inductive or deductive methods (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2012). A "bottom-up" style of data coding and analysis, an inductive approach ensures that what the researcher maps during analysis closely matches the data's content by deriving codes and themes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). A "top-down" approach to coding and understanding data is the deductive way of data analysis, in which the researcher applies a set of concepts, ideas or topics to the data. The codes and themes are drawn more from the researcher's notions. The researcher's perceptions of the data and what they map during analysis may be closely related to the semantic data content (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

We used the inductive method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). It is a 6-step framework. It involves familiarising oneself with the data, creating codes, finding themes, revising themes, defining themes and writing an article (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and is illustrated below. The project group was involved when data were analysed, interpreted, and findings recorded. The next section explains the steps in analysing the data step by step.

Step 1 – Data familiarisation

In this initial phase of the data analysis process, I familiarised myself with the complete data set, which required regular and active reading. After transcribing the discussions, we read them; as we were reading, the participants and I noted interesting phrases and words as the requirement at this stage (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Step 2 – Code generating

The initial step in the analytical process is coding, which assists in the fine-grained, thorough data organisation (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). After completing step 1's familiarisation work, we produced a list of pertinent data points, queries, and connections between various data points (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). In this phase, we generated codes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). We ensured that the codes were well-defined. This prevents code duplication and ensures that it makes sense inside a wider coding framework. An example of transcripts is attached as Addendum G.

Step 3 - Theme search

This stage combines codes created in Stage 2 into potential themes and then collects all data for each likely theme. The third stage involves searching for prospective themes of larger relevance

by reviewing the coded and collected data extracts (Braun & Clarke 2006). I analysed and categorised the list of coded data into probable themes – and then data were integrated based on the relationships between themes and sub-themes that were coded (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).). The researcher constructs themes by analysing, combining, comparing, and visually mapping how codes connect (Varpio et al., 2017), not by letting them arise from the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Although themes should be significant on their own, according to Braun and Clarke (2014), they should also work in concert to create a coherent whole – and we tried to ensure that.

Step 4 – Themes revision

At this stage, we reviewed themes. We collapsed themes when we discovered that possible themes at Stage 3 did not have enough data to support them and were unsuitable (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From the words of Braun and Clarke (2006), to ensure a good match between codes and themes, the researcher examines the coded data presented within each topic at the first level of analysis in this stage. In this step, inquiries like: "Does each topic have enough evidence to support it? Is the supporting evidence in line with the topic it supports? Is it feasible that some of the concepts are too varied or broad?" are made (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:5). We reviewed the themes and agreed on the final list of themes.

Step 5 – Theme definition

Then it was time to write the description of each theme. I did that. The participants checked and agreed that the themes were concise and informative enough. We worked towards ensuring this thematic analysis will contain themes that: (i) preferably have a single point of emphasis; (ii) avoid repetition, but they could expand on prior topics; they are related but do not overlap; all themes that overlapped between cycles and cycles were highlighted, and many were collapsed in Cycle one and raised in Cycle Two because we thought they fitted better in that cycle; and (iii) address our research questions directly (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Stage 6 – The write-up

Earlier procedures included collecting notes, defining themes, choosing sample data extracts, and starting the writing process (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This last phase included writing up the final analysis and the summary of the results. This was the stage for the production of the report, where I referred to the research question and the literature and presented a comprehensive summary of the study (see Chapter Six). I compiled a report from the recorded participants' reflections from the transcriptions of their verbal discussions to support the identified themes (Zuber-Skerritt, 2018). The data analysis was collaborative, but I examined it theoretically to achieve the set objectives and compiled the report.

4.3 VALIDITY

When dealing with the validity of qualitative data, researchers are essentially concerned with credibility (Mertler, 2020). According to Anderson et al. (2014), action researchers need a technique for evaluating the quality of their inquiries especially suited to their research initiatives. The criteria for action research validity proposed by Anderson et al. (2014) include result validity, process validity, democratic validity, catalytic validity and dialogic validity.

4.3.1 Outcome validity

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), action research's outcome validity concerns the findings' accuracy. The researcher(s) must be able to instil confidence in the correctness of the results obtained from the study methodology. Therefore, the research results must follow reality, and the researcher must convince the reader that the findings are accurate (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed various methods, such as member checking, triangulation, and prolonged engagement to establish credibility in qualitative research, which is equivalent to outcome validity in action research. These sections provide an explanation of how these methods were applied.

4.3.1.1 Member checking

Participants were allowed to review raw data after I had transcribed the audio material, the analysis and finally, the report. This allowed them to vouch for the correctness of the information and confirm that different elements of the study process correctly and sufficiently reflect their viewpoints, experiences and beliefs. During member checking, participants were given a chance to expand on or better clarify the facts they had previously supplied, but none made additions (Mills, 2011). A member checking tool is attached as Addendum F.

4.3.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation uses several techniques or data sources to gain full knowledge of the phenomena under investigation (Wilson, 2014). Triangulation has been considered a qualitative research technique to enhance credibility through converging information from different methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mertler (2009, 2020) describes triangulation as connecting several data sources to demonstrate their reliability or verification of the consistency with the facts while trying to consider their prejudices. Triangulation was done using various data generation instruments: collages, reflective diaries, project group discussions and the World Café.

4.3.1.3 Prolonged engagement

The purpose of prolonged engagement with participants was to communicate enough information to assist the participants in clearly understanding the outcomes of the research and to have time to express and explore their experiences, perceptions, beliefs and emotions. We ensured that the duration of the sessions was long enough to have participants deliberate on their experiences until we reached data saturation.

4.3.2 Process validity

Process validity concerns are whether processes have been used to achieve the required outcome (Waddington, 2018). Suppose the desired outcome, such as providing interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention, is required: in that case, appropriate processes for developing the teachers' capacity must be designed, put in place and tested for validity. Process validity determines result validity in this sense since the output will reflect whether the process was valid or invalid. In this study, the project group should comprise teachers with experience referring learners to SBST who refer such learners for DBST intervention. Process validity was meaningfully achieved in this study as the PAR process described in 4.2.3.3 above leads to developing guidelines that can be developed from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention. Member checking, triangulation and prolonged engagement were employed to ascertain this (Carter et al., 2014).

4.3.3 Democratic validity

Democratic validity is defined as how much research is conducted in cooperation with all stakeholders (Newton & Burgess, 2008). A record of project group discussions during all meetings, even the virtual meetings where applicable is available (see Addendum G available for verification of involvement of all co-researchers during all the events).

4.3.4 Catalytic validity

Herr and Anderson (2005) define catalytic validity as a measure of how much the research process directs attention, refocuses, and equips both researchers and participants to explore reality to better comprehend it and their involvement in altering the status quo. According to Herr and Anderson (2014), the best action research studies occur when the researchers declare a progressive change in their own and their participants' understandings. Catalytic validity is judged by the participants' contributions to the study – and their reflections on the learning supposed to take place during this study and their willingness to implement suggested guidelines (Mills, 2011). The reflective journals (see Addendum G) reflect a shift in co-researchers/participants' thinking and processes.

4.3.5 Dialogic validity

Dialogic validity may be accomplished through collaboration or reflective dialogue with others (Schulte, 2008). In a PAR study, co-researchers have an opportunity during the reflection stage to reflect on the action and results and to relook alternative actions going forward. During this stage, everyone could look critically at the processes and discuss matters of importance. Based on our reflections, the original plan was altered as we deemed possible. For example, it was not in the original plan to break down secondary questions, but we did because participants thought it would benefit the group (Bourbonnais et al., 2020).

4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I paid great attention to ethical issues throughout the study process since action research is conducted in real-world situations and includes frequent and open contact among the participants. Maree (2019) lists several principles to which the study adhered:

4.4.1 Obtaining permission for the research

It was imperative to obtain clearance from an ethics committee (Edu-Rec) before I commenced empirical research (Maree, 2019), as human subjects are involved in this study. Therefore, I sought permission from the Gauteng DoE and the North-West University to conduct this study. Copies of the ethics committee and the GDE clearance are attached to this document as Addendum D and E, respectively.

4.4.2 Informed consent

A participant's informed consent denotes that they were given the information they needed to decide whether to participate in a research project (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Maree, 2019). Addendum A contains a copy of the informed consent form for this research. It provides information on the study, an explanation of the procedures, information about participants' freedom to withdraw at any time, and a discussion of the possible risks and rewards for participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Maree, 2019).

4.4.2.1 Possible risk to the participants

In this study, through conversations, teachers will possibly be given the tools to help their learners having learning difficulties. This might be stressful to some teachers since they must talk about their experiences; there might be fear that others may think their strategies are wrong or insufficient. Some may feel overpowered by colleagues with extensive experience in the field. In mitigating this risk, I emphasised during the orientation workshop that everyone's views were

valued equally and that their responses would be anonymous when we wrote the report, so I ensured that everyone could voice their opinions, and no one dominated the discussions.

4.4.2.2 Benefits for participants

Primarily, participants contributed to a body of newer knowledge.

PAR gives participants a voice, and a means for individuals to get help from others going through comparable problems and difficulties. Individuals' concerns and the research team's supporting network improved the possibility that their voices would be heard.

The following were the anticipated benefit from the results:

- Teachers will know what strategies should be included in guidelines for offering interim support to learners awaiting the DBST intervention, and can develop or customise guidelines according to their unique settings in their classrooms.
- The DBST's work overload may be eased because teachers will continue with interim support instead of waiting for the DBST.
- The research community may add knowledge and solutions on how the waiting period between the referral of the learner to the DBST - and when the DBST intervenes - might be bridged.
- Learners and their parents might be comfortable knowing that learners with barriers will receive continuous support in mainstream schools, and may reach their potential regardless of their unique learning needs.
- The community might experience true inclusion where all learners are supported and given equal access to education.

Additionally, permission was sought from the principal and the school governing body; proof that permission was granted is attached as Addendum B and C.

4.4.2.3 Announcement of study results to participants

Chapter 5 of the dissertation was distributed to the participants via email. Participants will also be alerted to publications flowing from research. The research will also be published on the NWU Boloka site for public consumption.

4.4.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

Participants were made aware that despite their choice to forego anonymity, their answers would be kept confidential and only made accessible to approved individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maree, 2019).

4.4.4 Beneficence

Beneficence is an activity performed to benefit others (Biely, 2019). This concept indicates that the study should benefit participants, prevent damage and improve their well-being (Scott, 2017; Varkey, 2021). It also implies that the advantages to participants or their broader community should outweigh any pain or inconvenience caused by the study (Jahn, 2011; Tajir, 2018). To guarantee beneficence, I adopted the position of a reflective researcher who participates in ongoing self-reflection on our methods and practices (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). The benefits to teachers in this study were that they would be more aware of strategies they can employ to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST specialist intervention; they have broadened their knowledge of the research process; and they had an opportunity to connect with other colleagues dealing with similar problems and challenges (Watters et al., 2010). Another benefit of getting engaged in PAR is meeting and learning from others who have gone through similar problems. Members feel linked not just to the topic under investigation, but also to the individuals that make up the team. People participating in PAR often express a feeling of community and the chance to build connections (Baum et al., 2006). However, amid the benefits, there are risks. Possible risks were that it might have been stressful to some participants since they had to talk about their experiences, and they might have been scared that others may think that their strategies were wrong or insufficient (as reflected in the reflective journals of others). To mitigate this risk, I emphasised during the orientation workshop that everyone's views will be valued equally and that their responses will be anonymous when we write the report. Some might have felt overpowered by those with extensive experience in the profession, so I ensured everyone had an equal opportunity to voice their opinions, and no one dominated the discussions.

4.4.5 Respect

According to Maree (2019), scientific research typically necessitates close collaboration and coordination among many people and institutions; thus, ethical norms foster qualities such as trust, responsibility, mutual respect and justice. Kemmis et al. (2014) aver those researchers have two basic ethical obligations; to respect the people involved and affected and to avoid harming them. Recognising the integrity and humanity of those involved in and affected by research involves respecting their humanity as people whose rights and integrity must be maintained and not harmed during the study process (Kemmis et al., 2014). Thus, I maintained individual respect

founded on the realisation that the autonomy of every participant, and their right to self-determination is based on their ability to make and choose their own decisions, including withdrawal from the study at any time without repercussions (Singh & Hylton, 2014; Tajir, 2018).

4.4.6 Justice

To promote justice during research, all participants must contribute equally, and no one should feel overwhelmed, as in being expected to perform more than others or more than they can handle (Kemmis et al., 2014). I tried to maintain justice by using honest and transparent methods and ethical considerations. In the informed consent, my position as a researcher and co-researchers' roles were conveyed explicitly.

4.4.7 Social benefit

The following were the anticipated benefits from the results:

- Teachers will know what strategies should be included in guidelines for offering interim support to learners awaiting the DBST intervention - and can develop or customise guidelines according to their unique settings in their classrooms.
- The DBST's work overload will be eased because teachers will continue with interim support instead of waiting for the DBST.
- The research community may add knowledge and solutions on how the waiting period between the referral of the learner to the DBST - and when the DBST intervene - might be bridged.
- Learners and their parents might be comfortable knowing that learners with barriers will receive continuous support in mainstream schools, and reach their potential regardless of their unique learning needs.
- The community might experience true inclusion where all learners are supported and given equal access to education.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The research methodology and preliminary data presentation were outlined in this chapter. I explained how I selected the co-researchers and how data was generated, analysed and interpreted. Last, I discussed the quality criteria we adhered to within this study. In the following chapter, I will discuss the research findings.

CHAPTER 5 : PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

I discussed the methodology chosen based on the emancipatory paradigm in the previous chapter and how it influenced the data generation for this project. I discussed the research strategy data generation throughout the PAR cycles. In this chapter, I analyse and interpret the qualitative data generated through collage construction, project group discussions, reflective diaries and the World Café with six participants. I first compiled transcripts (Addendum G) of the discussions, after which the data was coded.

5.2 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

5.2.1 I refer to the following participant count when I discuss the themes:

- Majority = five to six participants
- Most = three to four participants
- Some or few = one to two participants,

and referencing as follows:

From the discussions

Example: (P1:3, #72-73)

P1 = Participant and number

:3= Page number

= Lines

From the reflective journals:

Example: (P3:RJ#3)

P3= Participant and number

RJ= Reflective journal

= Lines

From the World Café discussions:

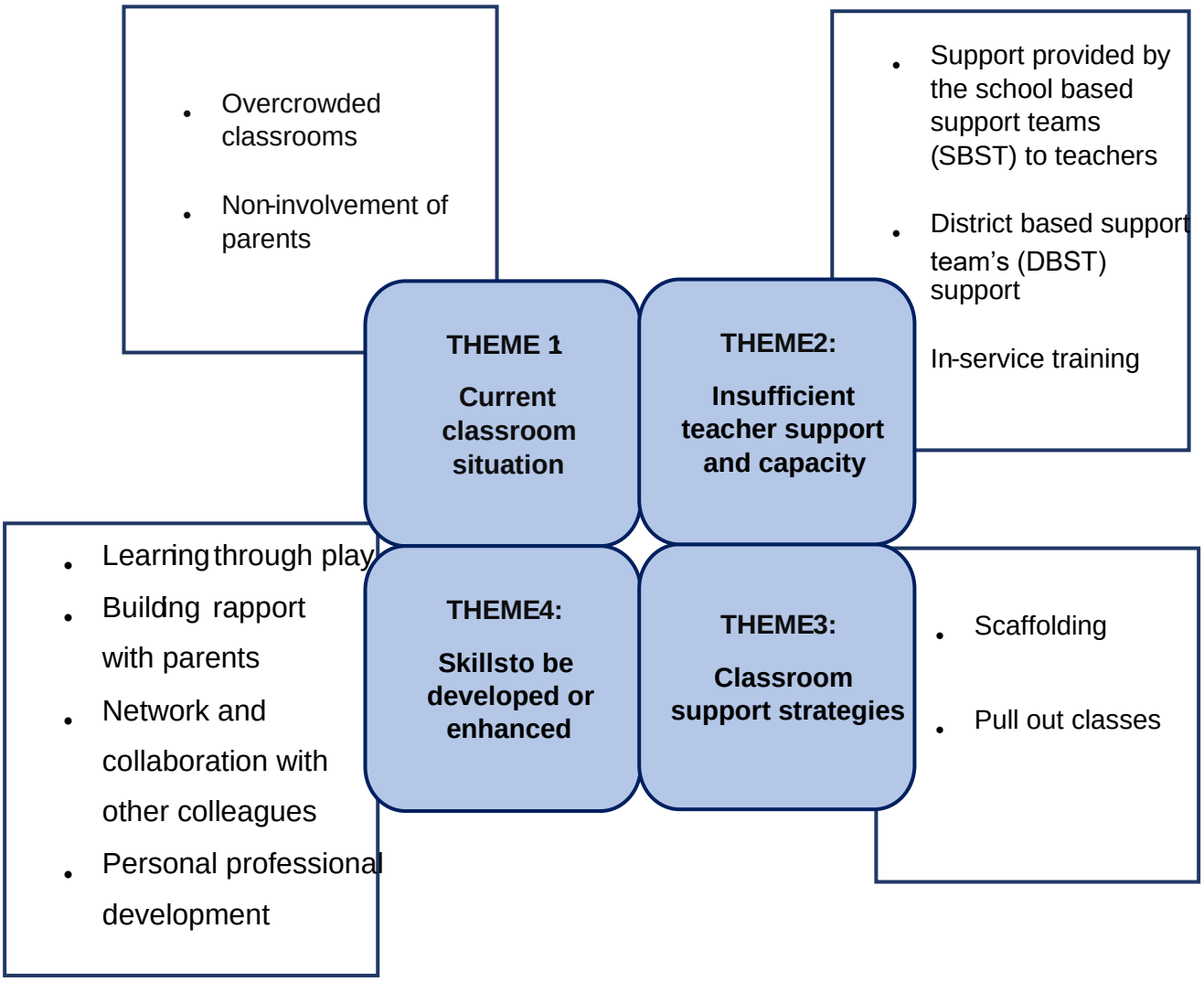
(P6: A1,#4)

P6: = Participant and number

A1 = Table A discussion 1= page number

= Lines

Although I am aware that the quotations below include grammatical errors, I left them unedited to maintain the core of the data, as none of the participants were English first-language speakers. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the themes and sub-themes, and the discussions follow.



(Author compilation)

Figure 0-1: Themes and sub-themes as identified during the data analysis

5.3 DISCUSSION OF IDENTIFIED THEMES

In the previous chapter, secondary questions of this study were answered during each cycle of the PAR. The first secondary question is: What are teachers' experiences awaiting support from the DBST? And it was answered through the collage building activity in Cycle 1. The second and third secondary questions were: What strategies do teachers currently utilise to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention? And What strategies could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention? These questions were answered during the project group discussions, and the fourth secondary question was: What guidelines can be developed from the findings to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention? This question was answered through the World Café.

The themes that emerged from the data analysis of the first secondary question are *current classroom situation* and *insufficient teacher support and capacity*.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Current classroom situation

The experiences of teachers awaiting support from the DBST are that in the classroom, there are learners who need individual attention, but there is no time to provide them with individual attention because they are expected to cover the annual teaching plan within a specified period. Classrooms are overcrowded, which makes it difficult to maintain discipline. Learners also experience English as second language as a barrier. Additionally, teachers believe they lack the necessary training to engage learners with barriers fully. Also, some parents may not want involvement in their children's education, and finances usually constrain those that would like to be involved. Amidst the factors stated as the current situation in the classroom, overcrowding and non-involvement of parents featured prominently.

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme: Overcrowded classrooms

According to Marais (2016), overcrowded classrooms will continue to plague the South African educational system for the foreseeable future. Several research studies have highlighted overcrowded classrooms as a learning barrier, resulting in teachers being unable to properly meet all learners' demands. Participants believe their learners were disadvantaged daily because they (teachers) cannot provide individual attention to learners, despite knowing this method works and is best suited for their learners. The many learners per class, according to Booysen (2018), is a problem that impedes quality teaching and learning. Overcrowded classrooms have been described as hindering teachers' self-efficacy, making them feel inefficient since they cannot devote attention to all learners, according to the Payne-van

Staden (2015) study. When teachers described their situation in the classroom regarding overcrowding, most identified overcrowded classrooms as obstacles to individual attention and a contributing factor to the lack of classroom discipline maintenance. In Williams (2015), the successful implementation of inclusive education was reportedly hampered by overcrowding, among other factors.

5.3.1.1.1 Overcrowded classrooms hamper individual attention

The teachers' responses indicate that they cannot assist learners who require individual attention because it is difficult to interact with learners one-on-one due to overcrowding.

Participant 2 stated, *"I mean we have what? 52 learners in the class, it's difficult to focus on that specific learners coz he needs that individual attention" (P2:2, #50-51).* The other participant stated that: "*Overcrowding is a problem. I actually can't access all the learners and give support to all the learners because of overcrowding"* (P4:3, #72-73*)*.

The assertions back up Emmer and Stough's (2001) claim that overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to monitor behaviour and activities. Cassim and Moen (2020) and Imtiaz (2014) identified overcrowding as an issue that can thwart the successful execution of inclusive education. The authors claim that when the teacher-to-learner ratio is not favourable to successful learning, it is difficult to execute inclusive education effectively (Harmuth, 2012). Some participants believe that another drawback of overcrowded classes is that learners may be perceived to be having learning difficulties when they are just not performing diligently due to overpopulation. Some participants learnt during the Covid-19 rotation system when the number of learners allowed to attend school for a certain period was drastically reduced, that some learners may never have faced difficulties.

Regarding this point, Participant 2 stated:

"I had a learner last year when covid started he could not do anything to my surprise covid happened, the learner got like your eighty-something percent in the class, so it goes back to ...with lack of corporal punishment we don't know whether this child has a barrier for real or not or they just took advantage of the situation that mam' ..... is not gonna do anything to me" (P2:9-10, #267-270).

Participant 1 added:

"*… just to add to what ..... has said and thank you for highlighting that there's also a positive side what I've learnt from her is that, meaning that learner was just hiding behind the crowd,*

the learner never had a problem per se so is that there was saying that I'm at the back mam' cannot reach me quickly, mam cannot know me but now that we have, the learner will just relax and sit back. Now that the number has been reduced, mam is able to reach all of them, and then the learner now is responding positively and is exposed then he can be able to do meaning there was absolutely no problem the problem was overcrowding" (P1:10, #276-280).

5.3.1.1.2 Overcrowding makes it difficult to maintain classroom discipline

According to Mustafa et al. (2014), classroom management and discipline are hindered by many learners in one classroom. Learners in larger classes are more likely to engage in disruptive behaviour such as shoving, crowding and even assaulting one another. This can have a detrimental effect on classroom discipline. Teachers lose crucial lesson time in these situations since they spend most of the lesson time attempting to control the learners, leaving little time for actual teaching (Imtiaz, 2014). Some participants reported that they struggle to maintain discipline in overcrowded classrooms.

Participant 5 stated that:

"The other problem I'm facing is overcrowding. Overcrowding makes it very difficult to support struggling learners and to maintain discipline in class" (P5:5, #142-143).

Cassim and Moen (2020) claim that overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to deliver and discuss the material in-depth, consistent with Participant 5's response. According to Muthusamy (2015), maintaining order in an overcrowded classroom is difficult for teachers, and some leave the profession altogether. Amnesty International (2020) reported that during a typical lesson, compared to the OECD, which spends 78% of classroom time on actual teaching and learning, South African teachers spend just 66% of that time doing so. Classroom management issues seem more prevalent in SA. Eighty-four per cent of teachers claim they regularly have to calm down unruly learners, compared to an OECD average of 65%.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme: Non-involvement of parents

Parental non-involvement in children's lives is an issue that has been extensively researched throughout the world (McDowall et al., 2017; Munje & Mncube, 2018). The lack of parental participation is one difficulty teachers have when attempting to help learners experiencing barriers to learning. Also mentioned in South African policies is that it is the chief duty of parents to identify and develop action plans to help their children overcome the obstacles they face in the educational process. However, not all parents are effective participants in their children's education, according to Adewumi and Mosito (2019), even though studies have

shown that certain children appear to be more productive in the classroom when their parents are involved in their schools (Lunts, 2003; Munje & Mncube, 2018). Participant 5, during the project group discussions, expressed a similar view:

"…sometimes I involve their parents like in their school work coz' of sometimes they get motivated if their parents are involved in their school work" (P5:21, #93-94).

Most participants in this study stated that the non-involvement of parents is a by-product of parental attitudes and that sometimes, parents' socio-economic circumstances prohibit them from providing full assistance to their children experiencing learning difficulties.

- **Parents' attitudes**

According to participants, parents' attitudes, as evidenced by their lack of participation, prevent teachers from providing full support to learners experiencing barriers to learning into their classrooms (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Saloviita, 2020).

The following responses reveal the sentiments of some participants.

Participant 4 revealed:

"Yes the other problem that we have is the lack of involvement of parents, … when you call parents, some parents do come and some don't come so some parents they become eh… they are *in denial when you tell them about their child's performance in class, so they will tell you that their child, they are not mad or they do work at home but when you tell them at school, when you tell them what they do at school, they do not believe you. So it's like you are insulting their child when it comes to them"* (P4:8-9, #236, 238-241).

Participant 1 stated:

"… the problem is whereby now you find that other parents, they don't want to acknowledge that learners have problems, and they need to be referred to other schools so, you find the problems it start with parents, where it's saying no, no, no my child doesn't have problem (P1:10-11, #294-296).

According to Logsdon (2020), it is usual for parents to be in denial when they first discover that their children are having difficulties in school. The conclusions of this study are supported by the findings of the studies by Chandrashekar (as cited by Madiba, 2015) and Pilusa (2006),

which discovered that denial occurs in families and that parents spend years attempting to find a solution and treatment for the issue. They could visit several hospitals, try complementary therapies, or resort to religion hoping to see a miracle.

- **Lack of financial resources**

According to some participants, not all parents are opposed to or in denial about the learning support process. While some parents accept the placement of their children in special schools if the DBST deems it appropriate, they cannot pay for transportation to special schools owing to financial restrictions.

Participant 1 stated:

"*…that is that a child would love to go, but now due to socio-economic issues, it might be distant and far for a child to reach that school and lastly, affordability might be one of the challenges in terms of parents to take the child to that school…"* (P1:11, #300-301).

According to Taylor (2014), socio-economic factors have a big effect on how well education is provided in any community, which is consistent with some participants' responses. Bayat et al. (2014) wrote that socio-economic conditions influence education provision in any society. Successful learning is controlled by resources; the lack of human and material resources in any culture is detrimental to the ability to learn (Makhalemele, 2011). There are not enough special schools in South Africa, making it difficult to meet the country's growing population in terms of educational opportunities (Bayat et al., 2014). When learners with barriers are assigned to special schools, parents must pay for the transportation of their children out of their own money (Khumalo & Hodgson, 2017), and since many parents cannot pay, many learners cannot attend those schools.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Teacher support and capacity

The major role in supporting teachers in this new educational reform (inclusive education) is the ESS (DoE, 2001). According to Lazarus (2003), ESS should work to lessen the obstacles to growth and learning while attempting to prevent the same issues from recurring in the teaching and learning environment. Supporting teachers is an important aspect of of capacitating them to support learners awaiting DBST interventions since teachers who are supported at work tend to flourish in their profession (Mansfield, 2020). In positive psychology teacher support positively corelates with engagement and accomplishment (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021) improving teacher competence and encouraging teachers to tap into their inner into internal resources to overcome challenges and in turn support learners, colleagues and

management (Rothmann et al., 2019). During the discussion, participants discussed the support they receive from the SBSTs and DBSTs.

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme: Support provided by the school-based support teams (SBST) to teachers

The SBST addresses barriers to learning and teacher development at schools (DBE, 2014). Mphahlele (2005) suggests that SBSTs may serve to maximise the involvement of all learners and enhancing the educational possibilities of learners who face learning barriers.

In Participant 2's words:

"…except that I'm a member of the SBST but funny enough I don't know what our responsibilities are…. I don't remember discussing referral of learners I don't know how many as a member it's sad that I don't know how many learners have been referred for DBST intervention and also there is no proper communication between SBST and the LSE" (P2:11, #309-315).

Participant 4, in her reflective journal, stated:

"I don't think we utilise the SBST enough, they are there to help us, but we don't understand their role, so we don't consult with them often enough, we try to do things on our own most of the time and fail then we go to them. Even after I referred a learner to them, I don't do follow-up, I have always assumed that when they have something to tell me they will call me and tell me but it does not happen that way" (P3:RJ#3).

According to some authors, the SBSTs are not actively identifying and resolving learning impediments at their schools (PMG, 2019; Ojageer, 2019; Zulu, 2019).

According to Maphumulo (2019), the SBSTs' help to teachers has little effect and is inadequate since SBST members are unsure how to handle most situations that need action. In agreement, Naidoo (2014) states that many schools are still grappling with the role and core functions of the SBST.

5.3.2.2 Sub-theme: District-based support team's (DBST) support

According to DoE (2005), the DBST is responsible for not only identifying required resources for learner support but also evaluating the level of support needed by teachers and learners - and providing the necessary support. However, participants believe that the DBST has little impact because referrals are not followed up, and identified barriers needing additional support

and interventions are not addressed. The experiences of most teachers awaiting support from the DBST are that the DBST takes too long to visit the schools for intervention:

Participant 1 stated:

"…*at some point you find that they take too long to arrive…" (P1:5 #114)*

and Participant 2 said:

"Because LSEs will be doing their assessment, everything is in place, the paper is in place, but now when it comes time for DBST to come assess and place at relevant specialised schools they hardly come, they take forever…" (P2: B10,#58-59).

In the meantime, while waiting for the DBST, teachers cannot support learners because they depend on the DBST to provide support, according to Participant 1.

Participant 1:

"We are depending on DBST to be part of us and be involved because as a teacher, I want to create an intervention, I want to intervene to ensure that each and every learner succeeds, and they progress, but if I don't know the barrier of the learner being identified" (P1:5 #110-112).

Participant 7 said:

"…but then it takes time and in that time that we spend waiting for the DBST a lot could have been done…" (P7: B11,#80-81).

Some participants stated that owing to the delay in the DBST support, they ended up not providing any meaningful intervention to some learners but only keeping them busy.

In the words of Participant 5:

"…*Oh …ok. I use three strategies for my learners the first strategy that I use sometimes I have no choice but to babysit them because eh…I don't know what to do as a teacher sometimes…"* (P5:20, #89-90).

Participant 7 stated the following:

"…Babysit them and keep them busy in the meantime while we are finding a solution…, So, it means that the red learner is going to school just to be kept busy without any learning taking place…" (P7: B20,#282, 294).

5.3.2.3 Sub-theme: In-service training

The role of today's teachers has unprecedentedly transitioned towards being more multidimensional, resulting in disproportionate expectations of teachers and their position (Amadi, 2013). Many teachers cannot meet these expectations (European Commission, 2000). In-service training needs to be adapted to enhance teachers' skills (Hilal & Demiralp, 2016; Osamwonyi, 2016). Some participants feel they are not adequately trained or prepared for inclusive education.

Participant 3 stated:

"We are not trained, oh…thing is the problem is that we are not trained to be fully interactive with learners who have barriers. You see, some stage you will find yourself eh…making wrong assumptions about the learner. If you are teaching, the child is not concentrating, busy playing" (P3:6 #144-146).

However, a small number feel that in-service training workshops they attended are sufficient to prepare them for learner support - according to Participant 1:

" I think workshop that we attend, ..we are able to support our learners…" (P7:7 # 163).

Based on the analysis of this data, the first objective of this study was to explore the experiences of teachers awaiting support from the DBST, and has been achieved.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Classroom support strategies

These two questions were posed during the project group discussions to answer the secondary questions relevant to this data collection cycle:

Second question: What strategies do teachers currently utilise to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?

Third question: What strategies could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?

One of the learner support objectives is to promote all learners' engagement in educational activities (DBE, 2014). Participation is a significant attribute in education, as it ensures that learners acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to live an independent, productive adult life (DBE, 2011). According to Engelbrecht et al. *(*2013), participation is when all learners are fully engaged in a lesson, and every learner takes responsibility for his/her work in an environment that guarantees learners an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential and the right support. To ensure participation in their classrooms, participants mentioned scaffolding, differentiation of content and re-teaching as some strategies teachers currently utilise to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention.

5.3.3.1 Sub-theme: Scaffolding

According to Gultig and Stielau (2009), the definition of scaffolding is the assistance that teachers provide to learners that allows them to expand their knowledge and undertake a task they would not normally be capable of. Learners who face barriers to learning may struggle to work independently and may require extensive initial support (DBE, 2010). This necessitates the expertise of teachers who can ascertain their level of understanding of content knowledge and then set suitable challenges to move them from the current level to the next level of competence (Mahlo & Condy, 2016). The authors' viewpoint mirrors Bronfenbrenner's theory that a growing child's development is aided by proximal processes becoming more complicated (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The term "scaffolding" refers to a teacher or peers giving an individual learner specific guidance, assistance, and support that start with a greater level of support and progressively enable the learner to become more independent of the supervision (DBE, 2010).

Participant 6 added:

"…So myself as an English teacher, in order to assist these learners that are struggling, I try to break down the lesson as much as possible to make it easy as possible even for the learner that can't …" (P6:18 # 30-31).

The majority of the participants achieved success in using scaffolding as a learner support mechanism in the classroom:

In the words of Participant 1:

“I’m saying that scaffolding is very important then as soon as now I understand their level is then I move to the second step whereby now I’ll be able to partner them” (P1: #33-34).

Different strategies of scaffolding are being practiced in the classroom.

5.3.3.1.1 Curriculum differentiation

Curriculum differentiation is adapting the curriculum to meet all learners' educational needs. It has a strong foundation in the principles of flexibility, mainly focusing on teaching, learning content and assessment (DBE, 2010a). Therefore, schools and teachers are provided with a support book to support learners with barriers. This support book, according to Participant 3 contains differentiated content and assessment:

Participant 3 stated:

The support book is working (P3:13 #372) “ …*Colleagues eh …a support book. Eh..it’s usually used to give support to those children, whatever the support that they need based on your identifying the, the, struggle that the child has, the barrier. So it goes a step down,…”* (P3:4 # 84-85) and according to Participant 2 the support book is provided to the school by the DBST.

Participant 2:

“…we differentiate the content and assessment using the support book that is given by the DBST…” (P2:30# 30-31) and Participant 3 said “…*Yes every teacher has that*..” (P3:4#91).

However, most participants knew nothing about the book and had never used it.

Participant 4:

“…Okay, so colleagues… I, I hear you talking about support book, but I for one, I haven’t seen any support book… like, what is it? Like, who does the differentiation?...” (P4: A32,#69-70).

Participant 5:

"…*Ok, and then, there is this book. I don't know that book what is called…" (P5::4#81).*

And Participant 6 asked:

"…So, are you saying that this support book is… contains work that we can use to assist learners with barriers in the classroom?" (P6: A32,#79).

The few participants with experience with the support book did not think of it as best practice.

According to Participant 2:

"…but I found that some learners do not like it when you give them the support book when others are working and maybe on the other textbook, and you give them the other work doing, maybe you giving them the colouring book whilst others are doing a comprehension on the book. So, they don't like doing different things at the same time…" (P2: A30,#32-34).

In addition to curriculum differentiation, participants stated that they use re-teaching as a scaffolding method to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention.

5.3.3.1.2 Re-teaching

Re-teaching is generally understood as post-instructional actions or methods teachers implement to help learners who did not understand the material, ideas, or processes from the initial teaching and learning activities. Re-teaching is, in theory, an opportunity for both teachers and learners to attempt again to understand the material, idea, skill, or process. Teachers may target and modify their teaching during this second chance (Bellert, 2015).

Most participants favour re-teaching as a mechanism that promotes participation, "…*ok so I normally go for re-teaching it works wonders…"* (P4:19, #54).

This echoes Rosenshine's (2012) view that re-teaching should be practiced whenever necessary. In agreement, Wegner et al. (2013) assert that re-teaching is an important component of education since it enhances learning and motivation in learners.

A few participants stated that they had tried it, but it did not work for them.

According to Participant 5:

*"Okay. The strategy that I'll use is re-teaching because sometimes a learner will repeat a grade and to me I'll think that they know the…the content, but only to find out that they don't coz' according to me, it always seemed like it is a revision to them, they must know the content. So re-teaching to me sometimes does not help me" (*P5 #62-65).

Closely related to re-teaching is the code-switching method, which is discussed next.

5.3.3.1.3 Code-switching

Various studies have shown that code-switching is a common characteristic of multilingual countries like South Africa (Moodley, 2010; Ncoko et al., 2000). Teachers and learners have traditionally switched between the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), such as English or Afrikaans, and another language they are both acquainted with in classrooms (Moodley, 2010). Ncoko et al. (2000) argue that code-switching is a useful tool for teachers to use with learners who are not native English speakers or who are facing other forms of academic difficulty.

Some participants in this study have cited code-switching as one strategy they employ in their classrooms to scaffold learners from known to unknown and simple to complex concepts.

In the words of Participant 3:

" *…my situation is that learners from grade three coming to grade four class not being able to comprehend the English …, when you giving them you say this is addition, you must go back and explain to them, addition in their home language is, so the LoLT that you are using has to be provisioned with code-switching in class"* (P3:3#64-67).

Participant 2's views about code-switching echo the literature that it is a useful tool for teachers:

"…then like ….. said, code-switching to their language their home language it helps a lot in the same breath as much as it does work" (P2:13#391).

Curriculum differentiation methods discussed so far: Re-teaching and code-switching are both teacher centred, and a learner-centred method being implemented is the peer teaching (buddy system)/partnering method.

5.3.3.1.4 Peer teaching (buddy system)/partnering method

Some participants use partnering, a method they call “buddy system” to promote participation.

Participant 2 defines the buddy system as follows:

“..buddy system but then, it is basically your grouping of learners with different learning abilities where the one who is gifted helps the struggling one” (P6: A6,#131-132).

However, some participants have stated this method has its disadvantages, as stated below.

Participant 6:

“learner in one table and they end up playing and not doing what they are suppose to do…” (P6: A6,#133).

Participant 1:

"… He's going to assist, to write words and to do things for the one who's unable at the end of the day the problem is not solved because my problem was: assist this one so that he can be able to do things or himself or herself" (P1:23,#38-41).

Few participants think there is a way to overcome the disadvantages.

Participant 7:

“…I think … rather than the gifted learner always being the one teaching….. err… so the learner that has barriers whereby they are strong, we need to put them in the position of dominance or like they are the one teaching the gifted learner. This is to avoid the name calling

stigmatisation because every day will be power balance rather than an equal power relations between the learners…" (P7: B59,#380-384).

5.3.3.2 Sub-theme: Pull-out classes

Engelbrecht et al. (2006) believe that the 'pull-out' classes are preferred in many schools, and few participants think this strategy is exclusionary.

Participant 2:

"… *in a full-service school we have what we call pull-out-system. You are told that the learner must be included in every aspect in the classroom but now there's this pull-out thing, learners who have barriers, they need to attend those classes and for me that's…it's exclusion…"* (P2:16,# 441-442).

Besides possibly being exclusionary, findings in the Tebid (2019) research revealed that teachers felt that the pull-out system makes learner support difficult when learners are constantly being pulled out of the classroom during teaching and learning to be supported in a different classroom. Bronfenbrenner's theory implies that screening and support should be conducted in the local and distant real-world where humans reside (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Taking the learner out of the mainstream classroom to a pull-out class resembles a situation where research on developing children is conducted in a laboratory; a practice that Bronfenbrenner was probably opposed to and a reason he developed the ecological approach to human development in the first place (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993,1999).

According to Pieterse (2010), pull-out not only denies learners with barriers the chance to connect with their classmates and have full access to the curriculum, but it may also include expensive duplications of systems and resources that schools must maintain.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Skills to be developed or enhanced

When asked the third secondary question: What strategies could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention? The following themes emerged:

5.3.4.1 Sub-theme: Learning through play

Therapists often use play-based learning to help children exercise their functional skills, improve their motor and perceptual abilities, and support their cognitive and linguistic development (Sutapa et al., 2021). Most participants in this study also recognise it as an

important tool that should be developed in education to support learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Participant 5:

"…The other strategy is learning through play, whereby you can use educational games to support errr… those with barriers…" (P5:63,#17-18).

Participant 2:

"…you can make an activity or a task whereby they learn through playing, make teaching and learning exciting in the classroom…" (P2:A44,#254-255).

Participant 4 was in agreement:

"…is learning through play. Learning through play is making err…teaching and learning exciting in the classroom…" (P4:63,# 30).

Learning through play has the potential to deviate from learning and only be viewed by learners as entertainment.

Participant 7:

"…if it is not structured or coordinated or supervised learners ended up having fun, and they learned nothing" (P7:B58,#353).

Participant 5:

"…So but the disadvantage of learning through play is that they will forget that they're in class sometimes, and they are here to learn not to play, yes…" (P5:26,# 127-128).

In agreement to this statement Participant 7 said:

"… for learning through play, you need to structure it in a way that it incorporates the concepts that you feel like need to be taught to them because certain concepts needs to be learned in a way that is fun for the learners" (P7:B58,# 354-355).

According to VVOB (2018), learning via play promotes holistic growth and is a natural method of education. Play enhances wellness and participation by allowing children to actively explore and connect with other children, adults and the environment.

5.3.4.2 Sub-theme: Building rapport with parents

According to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, a learner's development should be positively affected if their parents and teachers get along and have a good connection, as opposed to negatively affected if they do not (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993, 1999, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). As quoted below, most participants believe it is important that the teacher and the parents of the learners often communicate and build a relationship of trust.

Participant 1:

"…So my take in this is, we need to ensure that we build a rapport with parents, because at some point, you find that your child is not that is unable to do things, there is a background that is affecting that is a relationship between a child and a parent, that is becoming a barrier to learning for this child…" (P1:26,# 144-146).

Participant 5:

"…Okay creating a strong relationship, yes… a teacher can benefit on that strategy because emmm…you'll know your learners emmm… and then again, you'll be able to know their errr, struggles like, by communicating with like parents or whoever guardian if I may put it in that way…" (P5:B46,# 36-38).

Participant 3:

"And then, the other benefit of maybe having the… good rapport with the parents and the learners, is that it creates a more neutral environment whereby kids trust you the parents trust you…" (P3:B52,# 198-199).

The participants' views on the importance of building rapport with parents is echoed by Spreeuwenberg (2019), who asserts that learners have a better learning experience when parents and teachers work together effectively. Thorson (2018) agrees that parent-teacher cooperation is essential to teaching and learning because it provides learners with learning barriers with greater assistance than individual efforts. According to Ramsay (2022), parents are the learners' first interactions and are essential in ensuring that children are ready to learn when they start school. Growth and development of learners might be enhanced through parent-teacher collaboration.

5.3.4.3 Sub-theme: Network and collaboration with other colleagues

Some participants believed that collaboration with other colleagues would benefit their craft, that ideas on how to implement strategies such as the buddy system and others that were mentioned would be exchanged and that it (collaboration) would help them know one another better.

This view was articulated by Participant 2:

"And you know colleagues through collaborating with other educators; other strategies might come up is with up such as, well, with other strategies coming up we get to build a strong relationship between, among ourselves and from that we all get to learn" (P2: B58,#361-363).

Participant 5:

"…I mentioned collaborating with other teachers whereby we must like come together and talk about err…learning through, how must we structure it to be more educational…" (P5: B58, #356-358).

In agreement with the other colleagues regarding the usefulness of collaboration,

Participant 7 stated the following:

"…I liked the point that you mentioned that sharing ideas and collaborating with other teachers because it leads us as teachers to capacitate ourselves and empower ourselves with knowledge as to how do other people do it. When we share ideas, we are able to empower all of us…" (P7: B58, #366-368).

About networking, Participant 1 said:

"…So I use that network, to benefit myself and to enrich myself from other educators who are in other different provinces, who are dealing with the same matter, but in a different way…" (P1:28,#193-194).

Teachers' mental health is enhanced, and they can generate new ways to keep learners engaged when they collaborate with their colleagues (Pieterse, 2010).

5.3.4.4 Sub-theme: Personal professional development

According to Mkhuma et al. (2014), recognising learners who face learning difficulties is a vital step toward providing effective support; teachers in FSS must have the knowledge and expertise in this regard. Many teachers, however, face challenges in this area since they may lack awareness of various learning barriers and guidance on how to use the SIAS. According to Ntsanwisi (2008), this weakness makes it difficult for teachers to handle a variety of barriers in their classrooms. According to Mavuso's (2013) study, some teachers were not exposed to inclusive education modules during their formal training, particularly those who qualified before 2002. Some participants in this study also acknowledged that some teachers might not have been exposed to inclusive education modules during their formal training. Some participants, therefore, suggest that teachers take it upon themselves to acquire knowledge about different barriers to learning that may be prevalent in schools, so they are better positioned to support learners awaiting DBST interventions.

Participant 1 said:

"…I feel it is very important that we need to enrol and have short courses that will give us basic skills on learning, different types of barriers, and maybe also getting skills on how to deal with such skills" (P1:28,#183-184).

Participant 5's contribution was:

"…So I think enrolling in short courses will help me to to learn, more about how to deal with learners with barriers. So I think short courses will be helpful for me." (P5:28,#186-187).

After analysing and interpreting the data, we have met the second objective of this study to determine strategies that teachers currently use, and what strategies they could develop to help themselves become more capable of providing interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention. Strategies that teachers currently utilise to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention are: 1) Scaffolding, which entails curriculum differentiation, re-teaching, code-switching and the buddy system; and 2) Pull-out classes.

Strategies that teachers could develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention are: learning through play, building rapport with parents,

networking and collaborating with other colleagues and engaging in personal and professional development.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the main findings based upon thematic analysis.

The study's third and last objective was to develop guidelines from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention. These guidelines were now developed (see Chapter 6).

CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter I present the summary and conclusions drawn from the findings, and then present the guidelines that were developed by the project group. I commence by providing a summary of the study before revisiting the research questions and then answering the primary research question. Personal reflections are also included before mentioning what I think this study's significance is, and what the limitations are – before I conclude with the guidelines.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 described the backdrop to the research, and the problem statement was presented. The primary and secondary research questions were delineated. An outline of the study's theoretical foundation was provided in the chapter, including the research design and methodology and how the validity of the findings was measured.

Chapter 2 presented a literature review relating to learner support. In this chapter, the theoretical framework underpinning this study was presented, learner support was conceptualised, and the role of the ESS and the challenges of learner support in South Africa were discussed.

Chapter 3 presented the professional development of teachers, focusing on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning. The capacity and experiences of teachers regarding learner support were explored while the rest of the chapter focused on discussing whether or not teacher training (pre- and in-service) adequately prepared teachers to support learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Chapter 4 outlined the empirical research design and methodology encompassing the research paradigm, approach, design, methods, techniques and processes used by me as researcher to explore a phenomenon by bringing the unknown to the known. A PAR design was used to enable teachers to collaborate and empower one another other to support learners awaiting professional intervention. The study's primary goal and objectives were first explained. The qualitative data generation instruments used in the study and quality criteria were discussed. Lastly, data analysis and ethical aspects were explained. Throughout this chapter preliminary data was presented related to the cycles used in PAR.

Chapter 5 presented the findings of the study. The data was analysed using inductive thematic analysis. I analysed each cycle and answered the secondary research question pertaining to

that cycle before moving to the next, which made the process less complicated. The themes that emerged during cycles one and two were combined to avoid repetition.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by presenting the summary, conclusion, recommendations and finally the developed guidelines. Reflections, significance and limitations of the study are also stated. The guidelines that the project group developed to assist the teacher in offering interim support to referred learners while waiting for the DBST interventions have been added towards the end of the chapter.

6.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED

The main question for this study was: How can the capacity of teachers be developed to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention? To determine if we could answer this main question, I re-examined the answers to the secondary questions (Table 6.1). If the sub-questions of this study were answered, then the primary purpose of exploring how teachers' capacity to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention can be developed, would also have been achieved.

6.3.1 Answer to the primary research question

Based on the responses for the four secondary research questions it can be concluded that the answer to primary research question - How can the capacity of teachers be developed to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention? Is as follows:

The capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention can be developed by continuing the use of strategies of intervention that have proven to be effective for supporting learners while waiting for DBST intervention. Those strategies according to the teachers are: code-switching, using the support of differentiated curriculum and assessment, diversifying teaching methods and re-teaching. Another way that the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention can be developed is by using the guidelines developed (see Chapter Six) to apply strategies suggested such as creating inclusive classrooms, building strong relationships with learners and parents, encouraging leadership and good behaviour, implanting a reward system, maintaining discipline in the classroom and using classroom techniques such as: scaffolding, the buddy system wherein learners with different abilities are partnered so the one who understands the work can help the one who finds who finds the work too difficult to understand, re-teaching and curriculum differentiation.

Additionally, the strategies that teachers could develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention are: learning through play, building rapport with parents, that teachers could build on their lay counselling skills, enrol for short courses to develop skills to support learners who experience barriers to learning, and networking with other colleagues. These strategies are also included as part of the guidelines.

6.3.2 Responses to the secondary questions

6.3.2.1 First secondary question

What are the experiences of teachers who are awaiting support from the DBST?

6.3.2.1.1 Responses to the first secondary question

The experiences of teachers awaiting support from the DBST is that in the classroom, there are learners who need individual attention, but there is little time to give them individual attention because teachers are expected to cover the curriculum within a specified period. Classrooms are overcrowded, making it difficult to maintain discipline. Learners also experience English as language of learning and teaching as a barrier; teachers also feel they are not trained to be interactive with learners with barriers. Some parents do not want to be involved in their children's learning, and some want to be but are constrained by finances because parents must pay transport to special schools from their pockets.

Regarding the support from the DBST, the experiences of teachers awaiting support from the DBST are that the DBST takes too long to visit the schools for intervention and often that facilitators come to schools only to collect the referral forms and not for intervention. Teachers also get minimal feedback from the SBST regarding learners referred to them. Teachers are not clear either about the roles of the SBST and the LSEs.

The experiences of teachers awaiting support from the DBST are that some strategies of intervention, such as code-switching, using the support of differentiated curriculum and assessment, diversifying teaching methods and re-teaching, are effective for supporting learners while waiting for DBST intervention.

Lastly, teachers awaiting support from the DBST feel lost with no direction, think that inclusion is difficult to implement and are frustrated that they do not know the barriers that the learners' experience and therefore, cannot implement appropriate intervention plans.

6.3.2.2 The second secondary question

What strategies do teachers currently utilise to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?

6.3.2.2.1 Responses to the second secondary question

Teachers currently utilise strategies to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention, such as scaffolding, making lessons more practical, partnering, working from workbooks according to learners' level of competence, re-teaching, babysitting and the pull-out system. Participants described these strategies in the text and some were detected during the literature review. Suggestions on how these strategies might be applied to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention are detailed in the guidelines included in this chapter as a response to the fourth secondary question of this study.

6.3.2.3 The third secondary question

What strategies could teachers develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention?

6.3.2.3.1 Responses to the third secondary question

The strategies that teachers could develop to capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention are: learning through play, building rapport with parents, that teachers could build on their lay counselling skills, enrol for short courses to develop skills to support learners who experience barriers to learning, and networking with other colleagues. These strategies are also included as part of the guidelines.

6.3.2.4 The fourth secondary question

What guidelines can be developed from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention?

6.3.2.4.1 Responses to the fourth secondary question

Guidelines that can be developed from the findings to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention.

Based on the responses of the project group, the following guidelines were developed:

GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS IN PROVIDING INTERIM SUPPORT TO LEARNERS AWAITING SPECIALISED DBST INTERVENTION

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDELINES

Based on the findings of this study, we developed guidelines to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention. The project group members participated in the development of this document. They offered essential contributions and insights based on their practices and experiences since they are teachers in the classroom. The goal of documenting these suggested guidelines is to capacitate teachers with the tools they can use to bridge or shorten the time between learners' referral to the DBST and the DBST's intervention. Teachers have stated that their experiences while waiting for the DBST are less than ideal because of issues that make it challenging to support learners with barriers. They have to continue to deliver on curriculum requirements within the prescribed timeframes. Teachers must ensure that all learners benefit from and thrive despite their diversity and varying needs while engaging in educational activities. This may be accomplished by firstly preparing the classroom for inclusion. Supporting learners who experience barriers to learning is one aspect of inclusion. Inclusion also involves developing a learning environment that benefits all learners. So the first step would be to set up the classroom to be inclusive.

2 CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Inclusive classrooms are inviting and pleasant places that value and accept differences. The benefit of inclusive classrooms is that they promote all learners' academic achievements and foster greater social interaction (Lamport, 2012). It is important to create inclusive classrooms, especially in FSS where learners attend pull-out classes, which may create low self-esteem and bullying opportunities. Teachers may take the following steps to create inclusive classrooms:

2.1 Set clear and direct rules

The teacher and all learners may discuss and agree upon rules, including rewards and consequence management when appropriate. Below is an example of rules in an inclusive classroom.

(Source: https://www.teacherspayteachers.com).

Figure 0-1: Classroom rules

After setting clear and direct rules, those rules should be adhered to by all learners. The best way to ensure that learners obey authority is to involve parents and build strong relationships with both the learners and their parents.

2.2 Build strong relationships

The teacher-learner connection is crucial to creating a positive learning environment and supports dealing with problematic behaviour. It is a chance to increase mutual respect and trust, which fosters a culture of respect. If learners are treated respectfully, they may model it for their classmates and teachers. If learners respected their peers, bullying and stigmatisation would stop because they would respect their classmates, even those who attend pull-out courses.

2.2.1 How to build strong relationships with parents

i. *Be friendly, warm and welcoming when meeting or talking to parents. Most parents only occasionally interact with teachers, so make sure that at least 90% of your encounters with them are positive.*

ii. *When you encounter or converse with parents, be kind, inviting and pleasant. Ensure that your interactions with them are positive because most parents only periodically interact with teachers.*

iii. *Declare your intentions from the onset to eliminate uncertainty, which may cause anxiety for both the parents and the learner. Make sure that parents understand that you want to partner with them, you look forward to working with them and appreciate their support.*

iv. *Communicate often and in a variety of ways. Create a WhatsApp group for parents, or use the homework diary as a forum to discuss how to better help your learners. Regularly provide updates on what's happening in your class and the learning and progress you have seen.*

v. *When phoning parents or meeting with them to address an issue, start with the good news and positive compliments. Every learner has strengths and brings something positive to the classroom. Identify learners' strengths and highlight them.*

vi. *When asking questions to fill in the support needs assessment (SNA1) form, use positive language, and make no judgements or over-promise solutions. Let the parents know you will work together to address identified barriers. Be clear about how you would like them to help and what role they will play in the learning support process.*

vii. *Ask open-ended questions and then listen carefully to the responses. Listen, parents know a whole lot about their children.*

viii. *When speaking to a parent in front of a learner, smile at the learner and establish eye contact with them to show you care about them. Describe to the parents what the learner did well in your class. Then, if you have any worries, express them.*

2.2.2 How to build a strong relationship with learners

i. *Let children know you will work with them, not on them, in addressing the identified barriers.*

ii. *Communicate with them on their level and allow them to share their stories and suggestions.*

iii. *Talk to learners about other things even when they are not school-related.*

iv. *See things from the child's point of view.*

2.3 Implement a rewards system

An incentive system may boost and support learners' confidence. There should be recognition for good behaviour. A rewards system encourages good behaviour and motivates learners who go above and beyond those standards. Verbal affirmations are a powerful tool for encouraging learners. The system should provide incentives that the learners find appealing. Learners will be motivated to work hard for their prizes. The next stage will be to maintain discipline in the inclusive classroom after the instructor is pleased with the environment's inclusivity and the respect it fosters.

2.4 Encourage leadership and good behaviour

Talk to learners about why you expect certain behaviour and why you want your classroom to be inclusive. Involve them by asking for their suggestions on ensuring inclusivity in your classroom.

Share your understanding and ideas on the leadership you wish for by clearly articulating your expectations and responsibilities. Add specific examples of leadership responsibilities to encourage inclusive attitudes and practices.

As much as the space may allow, see that the learners' desks are arranged in mixed ability or similar ability groupings depending on the task, so they can easily work together and help one another.

3 Maintaining discipline in the classroom

- *Some ideas to attend to this have been adopted (Ojageer, 2019).*
- *The teacher may arrange the classroom space, so that he/she can move around easily and have access to all learners; this makes maintaining discipline easier.*
- *Some learners who experience barriers to learning, such as ADD, ADHD and those whose eyesight is less than 20/20, need to sit close to the teacher and the chalkboard to prevent distractions and improve focus on the subject matter learnt.*

- *Use the walls to display the main concepts in pictures, so they can remember them, and occasionally, the teacher should draw learners' attention to those pictures. They can also be used for revision purposes.*

4 Scaffolding

Regarding scaffolding, the teacher should ensure that the learner understands the concept being taught to the point where they can recall the work, comprehend it, apply, analyse, evaluate, etc. (Nel, 2015), whatever the requirement might be, according to the relevant key performance indicators. Before scaffolding may be applied, we suggest that the teachers prepare for it by:

- *Revising or re-teaching the portion of the work from the previous term or grade that the learner will be assessed on in the baseline assessment to make sure that the test is fair and based on the concepts that the learner knows.*

- *Conduct a baseline test to establish the level of competence of the learner.*

- *The teacher should also familiarise him/herself with the information on the SNA1 and SNA2 if he/she is not assessing the learner for barriers to learning.*

After the level of competence has been established, we suggest that scaffolding be undertaken in the following manner:

<u>Step 1</u>

- *Create an individual support plan per the SIAS's requirements in collaboration with other colleagues who know how to draw up the individual support plan.*

- *Incorporate tools of support such as curriculum differentiation, code-switching, learning through play and the buddy system. The teacher should ensure that the activities in the individual support plan are simple and self-explanatory so the learner does not need constant supervision. Demonstrations may be in pictures or videos so that the learner can watch on his/her own or with minimal supervision.*

<u>Step 2</u>

The teacher should show the learner how the work should be done until he/she is confident that the learner can perform the activity independently. During this step, the teacher can let

the learner watch a video or follow recorded instructions to avoid spending a lot of time with one learner and not attending to the learners.

Step 3

When the teacher is confident that the learner can perform the activity independently, the learner may be given activities independently, and scaffolding would succeed. The first tool of scaffolding that will be discussed is differentiation, so we begin by differentiating between scaffolding and differentiation before we provide guidelines for differentiation.

4.1 Difference between scaffolding and differentiation

Scaffolding and differentiation are both broad instructional strategies that teachers use to educate a varied group of learners with varying learning needs in the same classroom or learning environment. These two strategies have a lot in common; the difference is that scaffolding is a process where the teacher moves a learner from where the learner's understanding is it is to where it needs to be (Ojageer, 2019). Differentiation is an instrument used to achieve the goals of scaffolding (Bornman & Rose, 2010; Lipscomb et al., 2010). Differentiation entails, among other strategies, dividing a topic, skill, or learning experience into manageable chunks and then providing learners with the support; they need to master each chunk. For instance, before giving learners the whole reading, teachers may have them read an excerpt from a larger work, discuss it with them to help them better grasp its purpose, and teach them the terminology necessary to understand the material. As an alternative, when teachers differentiate instruction, they might assign learners a different reading to better match their reading level and ability, give the class the option to select from a variety of texts so each learner can choose the one that most interest them. The class may also be given several options for completing a related assignment (for instance, the learners might be allowed to write a traditional essay, draw an illustrated essay in comic-style, or use other methods). These are examples of curriculum differentiation meant to move from known to unknown (scaffolding).

4.2 Curriculum differentiation in practice

A classroom is said to be inclusive if inclusive approaches are practiced. The first inclusive approach that guarantees that all learners are catered for is differentiation.

According to DBE (2011) and Westwood (2001), differentiation can occur in terms of the content, the processes, and the products of each lesson at different levels, and the following are some of the differentiation strategies that might ensure inclusion:

- *Questions asked during the lesson may focus on different levels of difficulty for different individuals.*

- *Closer monitoring of the work of some learners takes place during the lesson.*

- *The rate at which the learners are expected to work may be varied, with extra time allowed for some.*

- *The extra practice may be provided for those who need it, often through differentiated homework.*

- *Some learners may need the teacher to go over a concept or piece of information again (re-teaching), using more examples and simpler language.*

4.2.1 Re-teaching guidelines

When teachers identify learners who have not understood the concepts, either by formal or informal assessments, they can select re-teaching as an option to present the content in a new or different way. Learners often struggle with particular work, but when the teacher clarifies or reiterates the instructions, the learner grasps it and completes the assignment successfully (Nel, 2015). When re-teaching is needed, we suggest that teachers should:

1) Understand exactly where the learner's level of competence is, and re-teaching should be done during class time to avoid the risk of it being not viewed as punitive. Learners should – as far as possible - not be made to stay after school, miss break times or other periods, so they can be re-taught.

2) After re-teaching occurs, re-assessment opportunities should be offered for the learners to demonstrate their learning and understanding.

3) Re-assessments may differ from the original assessments to provide learners with different ways to demonstrate their understanding (i.e. oral explanations, graphic organisers, pictures, etc.).

4) When planning re-teaching activities, teachers should pay attention to:

- *Teacher presentation style*

- *Learner learning styles*

- *Multimedia presentations*

- *Multiple intelligences*
- *Multi-sensory approaches, such as Visual, Auditory or Kinesthetic*

Re-teaching activities may include, but are not limited to:

- *Breaking down the concept into smaller components*
- *Modelling*
- *Learner self-assessments*
- *New tasks assigned by the teacher*
- *Presenting the information again in a different way*
- *Small group instruction*
- *Practice activities*
- *Peer tutoring*
- *Games and hands-on activities*
- *Cooperative learning (Marzano, 2006)*

4.2.3 Using the buddy system

The first step in using the buddy system is to partner learners with different abilities so the ones that understand the work done can help those who find it difficult to understand. Learners are to give moral support to other learners and even explain the work, but at no point should a learner write for another. So, the teacher must supervise them and ensure they are doing what they are supposed to do. The teacher should visit the partnered learners regularly to ask the struggling learner some questions to see if the learner understands.

Learners should be put in charge of their learning. In an inclusive classroom, all learners should be given leadership opportunities, from leading the lesson discussion to handing out papers. It benefits both the peer and the peer leader, as the leader develops leadership abilities and the peer learns to respect and work within the group roles.

I utilised the responses to these secondary questions to answer the primary question. Thus the answer to the primary question was: The capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention can be developed if teachers advanced or enhanced strategies, such as:

- learning through play;
- building a rapport with parents;
- networking and collaborating with other colleagues; and
- engaging in personal and professional development.

6.4 FINAL REFLECTION ON THE PAR PROCESS

I reflect on the process of PAR and the findings. I will structure my reflections as follows: reflections on the process, findings I expected, findings I did not expect and findings that disappointed me

6.4.1 Reflections on the process

During Cycle 1 – collage construction, all participants seemed to enjoy themselves. It was a great way to start the research process and put everyone at ease. However, during the second cycle, the project group discussions were more formal, and some participants seemed tense. I was happy about the amount of information they revealed about strategies they employ in their classrooms while waiting for the DBST intervention.

During cycle 3 – the World Café - the discussions were not as flowing as I expected. Participants were concerned about giving correct answers instead of comfortably engaging one another. They kept on pausing during conversations.

6.4.2 Findings that I expected

<u>Overcrowded classrooms</u>

I expected to find that teaching in overcrowded classrooms is stressful for teachers and that teachers cannot pay attention to all learners in overcrowded classes. This is supported by writers such as Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) and Sosibo and Nomlomo (2014), who believe that teachers cannot hold all learners accountable for participating and tend to dismiss those who are inactive.

Overcrowded classrooms impede effective teaching since most teachers have instructional challenges, disciplinary issues, physical concerns, and evaluation issues (Akhalq et al., 2016). Unfortunately, teachers in public schools continue to face significant difficulties due to overcrowding in their classrooms (Al-Amarat, 2011). According to Marais (2016), overcrowded classrooms cause irritation because when learners with difficulties are not sufficiently supported, both learners and teachers feel upset and display negative attitudes. In the Brofenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, attitude forms part of the resource characteristics of a person (Rosa & Tudge, 2013) which influences the intactions between the developing child with their direct influencers in the micro -system. When the teacher or the learner or both have negative attitude towards teaching and learning, the interactions will not stimulate growth as is expected. Additionall, negative attitudes might hinderthe development of a positive relationship between a learner and the teacher which might make it difficult for a affected learners to participate consistently in class activities and take responsibility for their academic goals (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Besides negatively affecting proximal processes, negative attitude may also be a barrier to effective engagement. According to positive psychology, having good relationships with systems at the micro level have significant, positive and enduring consequences for learners' academic and social development (Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010). It is imperative therefore to ensure that negative attitudes towards teaching and learning among teachers and learners are avoided. I hope *guidelines to support teachers in providing interim support to learners awaiting specialised dbst intervention* are helpful in assisting teachers to cope better even in overcrowded classrooms.

Teacher training

I expected that teachers would say they are not adequately trained to support learners with barriers. When asked about the type of training they received regarding learning support, most respondents said they were not trained to support learners with barriers to learning, even though they expressly mentioned that there are workshops conducted which they have attended. They also mentioned that they did not know how to deal with learners experiencing barriers to learning. This led to the conclusion that:

- They either do not perceive workshops as training because they remain incompetent in dealing with learners with learning barriers even after attending those workshops. It was made evident that educators remain incompetent in implementing learning support strategies when most of them stated that educators do not know how to fill in the SIAS forms, allow learners to progress undeservedly to avoid paperwork and do not differentiate the curriculum to suit the learners who need more support than others.

- Knowledge shared during those workshops is not enough to capacitate them to effectively support learners with barriers to learning. They do not consider those workshops as training.

- They do not understand that workshops are training. It is clear that educators' definition or perceptions of what training is differs from the researcher's definition or perceptions. In the views of most participants, lack of training has negatively influenced their and their colleagues' attitudes towards supporting learners with barriers to learning.

In 2.2.1 above, educators are pessimistic about inclusive education regarding learner support, resulting from perceived incapability to support learners with barriers to learning (Mkhuma et al., 2014). This statement was supported by participants' responses. According to the literature reviewed, educators at FSSs play a prominent role in providing education accessible to all and achieving the ideals of inclusive education (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018). However, they cannot achieve that ideal until they feel adequately equipped to effectively implement learning support strategies.

Based on the findings that teacher training does not adequately prepare teachers to support learners with barriers, I expected to find that learners with learning barriers are not supported during the waiting period for the DBST intervention. Teachers just award those learners marks to help them progress to other grades (Nong, 2020).

Also, I gathered that teachers are frustrated and think that inclusive education is a good idea on paper but cannot be implemented successfully in practice, and this did not surprise me.

6.4.3 Findings that I did not expect

I did not expect to find that there is a support book provided by the district that contains differentiated lessons or strategies that include differentiated assessments, but some teachers knew nothing about it. Two teachers used it; the rest have not seen or used the support. According to one participant, the support book came from the district office and was delivered

to SBST members. I did not expect that the SBST would withhold such important information from some teachers.

Some parents are involved and supportive of the school's initiatives even when the school recommends that their children be enrolled at a special school, but due to financial constraints, they cannot let their children attend special schools because the school does not provide transport for referred learners to attend special schools.

I was surprised to learn that teachers would sometimes tell learners to help others because they are struggling, and that struggling learners would be seated in the front row. Such measures may be viewed as exclusionary.

6.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Participating in a PAR study allowed participants to expand their understanding of the research process, as most of them had never been invited to participate in a research study before, so they gained an understanding of the research process.

- Teachers had an opportunity to share valuable strategies they could employ and enhance to capacitate themselves to offer interim support to learners awaiting the DBST intervention - and can therefore develop or customise guidelines according to their unique settings in their classrooms.

- The DBST's work overload may also be eased because teachers will continue with interim support while awaiting the DBST intervention, reducing the waiting period between the referral of the learner to the DBST and when the DBST intervenes.

- Learners and their parents might be comfortable knowing that learners with barriers will receive continuous support in mainstream schools along with their peers and reach their potential regardless of their unique learning needs.

- The community might experience true inclusion where all learners are supported and given equal access to education.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited in the following ways: Sedibeng West District of Gauteng Province, the district in which this study was conducted, has twelve FSS (Boshoff et al., 2014). Therefore, the study findings could be difficult to transfer to other schools since it was conducted in only

one. Teachers in other FSS of the same district may/may not experience the same waiting period as teachers in the research site.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken using a PAR approach in one full-service school in the Sedibeng West District in Gauteng. Through qualitative action research data generation instruments, such as collage construction, project group discussions, World Café and reflective journals, the research explored how teachers' capacity to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention can be developed.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that added to teachers' challenges of facing many challenges in the classroom, such as a lack of discipline, overcrowding and insufficient resources, they have limited knowledge of barriers that learners experience. This can be frustrating since it means they do not know how to support and address specific barriers without the help of the DBST. Despite this, they seem to have a positive outlook towards supporting learners with barriers. They also believe that networking and collaboration with colleagues is an important strategy in overcoming current challenges and developing the capacity to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention.

I trust that the guidelines developed for teachers whilst awaiting DBST intervention, will be helpful to many colleagues experiencing similar challenges.

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ANNEXURES

ADDENDUM A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark
South Africa 1900
Tel: 016 910 3111
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Education

(Bongiwe Nolisonto Mkwanazi)
Tel: 073 048 6530
Email: Bongiwe.mkwanazi@gmail.com

COMBER
Lesley.wood@nwu.ac.za
Johnnie.Hay@nwu.ac.za)

Date:03 November 2021

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I herewith wish to request your consent to participate in this research, which involves capacitating teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention. Before you give consent, please acquaint yourself with the information below.
The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-01018-21-S2

PR2126OJECT SUPERVISOR: Prof. Johnnie Hay
CO-SUPERVISOR: N/A
ADDRESS: Building 11B, Office 105, Vaal Campus
CONTACT NUMBER: +27 (0) 16 910 3143

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: Bongiwe Nolisonto Mkwanazi
ADDRESS: 18 Hexrivierberg Street, SE8. Vanderbijlpark.1911
CONTACT NUMBER: 0730486530

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656
This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also asked from the provincial Department of Basic Education as well as the school principal of Emfuleni primary school.

What is this research about?

The aim of this study is to:
Facilitate the development of collaborative strategies to enable teachers to provide interim support to learners who have been referred to the District-Based Support Team [DBST] for specialised intervention.

The objectives are as follows:

- To explore the experiences of teachers who are awaiting support from the DBST.
- Determine what tactics teachers now use and what strategies they could develop to help themselves become more capable to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention
- Establish guidelines that can be developed from the findings to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention.

Participants

- Participants will be qualified teachers working full time at a school in the Sedibeng West District,
- Teachers serving in the SBST who have experience with referring a learner for the DBST intervention and
- Willing to participate voluntarily in this study since PAR is non-coercive.

What is expected of the participants?

It's expected of every participant to:

- Sign the informed consent form agreeing to take part in the study
- be present at and participate fully in the project group meetings of 1hour per session.
- To document and submit their reflections after every meeting.

During the second cycle participants are expected to:
To fully participate in the discussions, give an account on how many learners in their classrooms are awaiting DBST interventions?, and describe strategies they employ to ensure that learners continue to participating in educational activities while waiting for the DBST intervention?

During the third cycle participants are expected to:
Attend the meetings and make sure that they understand what the world café method is about and how it works. Participants are also expected to make their contributions on what guidelines can be developed from the findings to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST interventions.

Benefits to the participants

Participating in PAR may allow you to expand your understanding of the research process. It's possible to gain self-confidence through learning research skills via PAR. You may gain confidence, gain understanding of the research process, and improve your critical thinking abilities by engaging in the research process. As a result, you'll be able to question the sources of information around you and make better choices as a result.

The following are the anticipated benefit from the results of this study:

- Teachers will know what strategies should be included in guidelines for offering interim support to learners awaiting the DBST intervention and will therefore be able to develop or customise guidelines according to their unique settings in their classrooms.
- The DBST's work over load will be eased because teachers will now be continuing with interim support instead of waiting for the DBST.
- The research community may add in the knowledge and solutions on how the waiting period between the referral of the learner to the DBST and the time when the DBST intervenes might be bridged.
- Learners and their parents might be comfortable knowing that learners with barriers will receive continues support in mainstream schools along their peers and reach their potential regardless of the unique learning needs and
- The community might experience true inclusion where all learners are supported and given equal access to education.

Risks involved for participants

In this study teachers will be empowered to support learners experiencing barriers to learning through discussions, this might be stressful to some teachers since they have to talk about their experiences, there might be fear that others may think that their strategies are wrong or insufficient. To mitigate this risk, I will emphasize during the orientation workshop that everyone's views will be valued equally, that their responses will be anonymous when we write the report. Some may feel overpowered by those who have been in the profession for a long time so I will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to voice their opinions and no one dominates the discussions.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

This standard will always be upheld. Participants' answers would be kept confidential and only made accessible to approved individuals, pseudo names will be assigned to each participant. Furthermore, I maintain individual respect founded on the realisation that the autonomy of every participant and their right to self-determination is based on their ability to make and choose their own decisions which includes withdrawal from the study at any time without repercussions (Singh & Hylton, 2014; Tajir, 2018).

Dissemination of findings

Chapter 5 of the dissertation will be distributed to the participants via email. Participants will also be alerted to publications flowing from research. Additionally, the research will be published on the NWU Boloka site for public consumption and ss per the requirements of the Gauteng department of basic education, an electronic copy this research will also be sent to the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management on the GDE Summary template

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

Yours sincerely
(B.N Mkwanazi)

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:

By signing below, I …….…….. agree to take part in a research study entitled:

A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of me in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the research process before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place)_____on (date) _____/_____/20____

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Researcher**

ADDENDUM B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR THE PRINCIPAL

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Education

(Bongiwe Nolisonto Mkwanazi)
Tel: 073 048 6530
Email: Bongiwe.mkwanazi@gmail.com

COMBER
Lesley.wood@nwu.ac.za
Johnnie.Hay@nwu.ac.za

Date 03 November 2021

PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL PRINCIPAL/OTHER RELEVANT PERSON

I herewith wish to request your permission for:
Teachers from your school to participate in this research, which involves having project group meetings at the school. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-01018-21-S2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR:	Prof Johnnie Hay (Johnnie.Hay@nwu.ac.za)
CO-SUPERVISOR:	N/A
ADDRESS:	Room 105, Building 11B, NWU, Vaal Campus, Vanderbilpark 1900
CONTACT NUMBER:	016-910 3143

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM	MEd-Student: Bongiwe Nolisonto Mkwanazi
ADDRESS:	18 Hexrivierberg street, SE8, Vanderbijlpark 1911
CONTACT NUMBER:	073 048 6530

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education/other relevant body.

What is this research about?

The aim of this study is to:

Facilitate the development of collaborative strategies to enable teachers to provide interim support to learners who have been referred to the District-Based Support Team [DBST] for specialised intervention.

The objectives are as follows:

- To explore the experiences of teachers who are awaiting support from the DBST.
- Determine what tactics teachers now use and what strategies they could develop to help themselves become more capable to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention
- Establish guidelines that can be developed from the findings to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention.

Participants

- Participants will be qualified teachers working full time at a school in the Sedibeng West District,
- Teachers serving in the SBST who have experience with referring a learner for the DBST intervention and
- Willing to participate voluntarily in this study since PAR is non-coercive.

What is expected of the participants?

It's expected of every participant to:

- Sign the informed consent form agreeing to take part in the study
- be present at and participate fully in the project group meetings of 1hour per session.
- To document and submit their reflections after every meeting.

During the second cycle participants are expected to:

To fully participate in the discussions, give an account on how many learners in their classrooms are awaiting DBST interventions?, and describe strategies they employ to ensure

that learners continue to participating in educational activities while waiting for the DBST intervention?

During the third cycle participants are expected to:

Attend the meetings and make sure that they understand what the world café method is about and how it works. Participants are also expected to make their contributions on what guidelines can be developed from the findings to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST interventions.

Benefits to the participants

Participating in PAR may allow you to expand your understanding of the research process. It's possible to gain self-confidence through learning research skills via PAR. You may gain confidence, gain understanding of the research process, and improve your critical thinking abilities by engaging in the research process. As a result, you'll be able to question the sources of information around you and make better choices as a result.

- **The following are the anticipated benefit from the results of this study:**
    - Teachers will know what strategies should be included in guidelines for offering interim support to learners awaiting the DBST intervention and will therefore be able to develop or customise guidelines according to their unique settings in their classrooms.
    - The DBST's work over load will be eased because teachers will now be continuing with interim support instead of waiting for the DBST.
    - The research community may add in the knowledge and solutions on how the waiting period between the referral of the learner to the DBST and the time when the DBST intervenes might be bridged.
    - Learners and their parents might be comfortable knowing that learners with barriers will receive continues support in mainstream schools along their peers and reach their potential regardless of the unique learning needs and
    - The community might experience true inclusion where all learners are supported and given equal access to education.

Risks involved for participants

In this study teachers will be empowered to support learners experiencing barriers to learning through discussions, this might be stressful to some teachers since they have to talk about their experiences, there might be fear that others may think that their strategies are wrong or

insufficient. To mitigate this risk, I will emphasize during the orientation workshop that everyone's views will be valued equally, that their responses will be anonymous when we write the report. Some may feel overpowered by those who have been in the profession for a long time so I will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to voice their opinions and no one dominates the discussions.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

This standard will always be upheld. Participants' answers would be kept confidential and only made accessible to approved individuals, pseudo names will be assigned to each participant. Furthermore, I maintain individual respect founded on the realisation that the autonomy of every participant and their right to self-determination is based on their ability to make and choose their own decisions which includes withdrawal from the study at any time without repercussions (Singh & Hylton, 2014; Tajir, 2018).

Dissemination of findings

Chapter 5 of the dissertation will be distributed to the participants via email. Participants will also be alerted to publications flowing from research. Additionally, the research will be published on the NWU Boloka site for public consumption and ss per the requirements of the Gauteng department of basic education, an electronic copy this research will also be sent to the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management on the GDE Summary template

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL/OTHER RELEVANT PERSON:

By signing below, I ……..……. agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.

- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place)_____on (date) _____/_____/20____

_____

Signature of School Principal/Relevant person

ADDENDUM C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SGB CHAIRPERSON

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Education

((Bongiwe Nolisonto Mkwanazi)
Tel: 073 048 6530
Email: Bongiwe.mkwanazi@gmail.com

COMBER
Lesley.wood@nwu.ac.za
Johnnie.Hay@nwu.ac.za

Date 03 November 2021

GOODWILL PERMISSION: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY/OTHER RELEVANT BODY

I herewith wish to request your permission for:
Teachers at your school to participate in this research, which involves having project group meetings at the school.
Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-01018-21-S2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Prof Johnnie Hay (Johnnie.Hay@nwu.ac.za)
CO-SUPERVISOR: N/A
ADDRESS: Room 105, Building 11B, NWU, Vaal Campus, Vanderbilpark 1900
CONTACT NUMBER: 016 910 3143

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: Bongiwe Nolisonto Mkwanazi
ADDRESS: 18 Hexrivierberg street, SE8, Vanderbijlpark 1911
CONTACT NUMBER: 073 048 6530

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

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- Determine what tactics teachers now use and what strategies they could develop to help themselves become more capable to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention
- Establish guidelines that can be developed from the findings to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST intervention.

Participants

- Participants will be qualified teachers working full time at a school in the Sedibeng West District,
- Teachers serving in the SBST who have experience with referring a learner for the DBST intervention and
- Willing to participate voluntarily in this study since PAR is non-coercive.

What is expected of the participants?

It's expected of every participant to:

- Sign the informed consent form agreeing to take part in the study
- be present at and participate fully in the project group meetings of 1hour per session.
- To document and submit their reflections after every meeting.

During the second cycle participants are expected to:

To fully participate in the discussions, give an account on how many learners in their classrooms are awaiting DBST interventions?, and describe strategies they employ to ensure that learners continue to participating in educational activities while waiting for the DBST intervention?

During the third cycle participants are expected to:

Attend the meetings and make sure that they understand what the world café method is about and how it works. Participants are also expected to make their contributions on what guidelines can be developed from the findings to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting specialised DBST interventions.

Benefits to the participants

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- The research community may add in the knowledge and solutions on how the waiting period between the referral of the learner to the DBST and the time when the DBST intervenes might be bridged.
- Learners and their parents might be comfortable knowing that learners with barriers will receive continues support in mainstream schools along their peers and reach their potential regardless of the unique learning needs and
- The community might experience true inclusion where all learners are supported and given equal access to education.

Risks involved for participants

In this study teachers will be empowered to support learners experiencing barriers to learning through discussions, this might be stressful to some teachers since they have to talk about their experiences, there might be fear that others may think that their strategies are wrong or insufficient. To mitigate this risk, I will emphasize during the orientation workshop that everyone's views will be valued equally, that their responses will be anonymous when we write the report. Some may feel overpowered by those who have been in the profession for a long time so I will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to voice their opinions and no one dominates the discussions.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

This standard will always be upheld. Participants' answers would be kept confidential and only made accessible to approved individuals, pseudo names will be assigned to each participant. Furthermore, I maintain individual respect founded on the realisation that the autonomy of every participant and their right to self-determination is based on their ability to make and choose their own decisions which includes withdrawal from the study at any time without repercussions (Singh & Hylton, 2014; Tajir, 2018).

Dissemination of findings

Chapter 5 of the dissertation will be distributed to the participants via email. Participants will also be alerted to publications flowing from research. Additionally, the research will be published on the NWU Boloka site for public consumption and ss per the requirements of the Gauteng department of basic education, an electronic copy this research will also be sent to the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management on the GDE Summary template

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

DECLARATION BY SGB CHAIRPERSON/RELEVANT RESPONSIBLE PERSON:

By signing below, I …….……. agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place)_____on (date) _____/_____/20____

_____

Signature of SGB Chairperson/Relevant responsible person

ADDENDUM D

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-4849
Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

Based on approval by the **Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (EduREC)** on 25 November 2021, this committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof JF Hay

Student / Team: B Mkwanazi (MEd student – 10990925) Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	1	0	1	8	-	2	1	-	A	2

Status: S =

Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single study

Commencement date: 25 November 2021 Risk: Low

Expiry date: 25 November 2022

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor/principal investigator/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EduREC:*
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EduREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRC and EduREC reserves the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*

- *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process; − withdraw or postpone approval if:*
  - *· any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
  - *· it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EduREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
  - *· submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or · new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

EMS-REC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via BaSSREC@nwu.ac.za.

The EduREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EduREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof JAK Olivier
Chairperson NWU Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 ES-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

ADDENDUM E

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CONSENT

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

814141112

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	02 November 2021
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2022-30 September 2022 2021/341
Name of Researcher:	Mkwanazi BN
Address of Researcher:	18 Hexrivier berg street
	South East 8
	Vanderbijlpark
Telephone Number:	0730486530
Email address:	bonqiwe.mkwanazi@qmail.com
Research Topic:	A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District-Based Support Team intervention
Type of qualification	Master's in Education
Number and type of schools:	1 Primary School
District/s/HO	Sedibeng West

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 permissio een granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to 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:

1.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.

[redacted]Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg. 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.govza

Website: wvvw.education.gpg.gov.za

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. Because of COWD 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.

4, The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.

5. 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.
6. A letter / document that outline 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.

10. 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.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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

.....

Mr Gumani Mukatuni

Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 02/11/2021

[redacted] Making education a societal priority [redacted]

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.govza

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Bongiwe Mkwanazi <bongiwe.mkwanazi@gmail.com> Wed, Mar 9, 1:05 PM

to Busi

Ms Mchunu

I have been granted permission to conduct research data primary school in Bophelong. The provision of the permission is that we can only have our discussion virtually. However, it is becoming very difficult for us some participants have network problems and load shedding is also a barrier in this regard. I request therefore that we be granted permission to have face-to-face meetings at a neutral venue where covid19 protocols will be observed.

I hope you find my request in order
Bongiwe Mkwanazi

Bongiwe Mkwanazi <bongiwe.mkwanazi@gmail.com> Apr 5, 2022, 12:15 PM

to Busi, Gumani

Noted with thanks.

On Tue, 05 Apr 2022, 11:40 Busi Mchunu (GPEDU), <Busi.Mchunu@gauteng.gov.za> wrote:

Good Day Researcher

You can go to school in the meantime whilst we are waiting for the formal letter from the HOD

Regards

Busi Mchunu
Assistant Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
Gauteng Department of Education: 6 Hollard Building Johannesburg 2001
Tel: (011) 355 1379 Fax: (086) 219 8568 I Hotline: 0800 000 789
Email: busi.mchunu@gauteng.gov.za
www.education.gpg.gov.za

ADDENDUM F

MEMBER CHECKING

I ……declare that I have read the transcribed the audio material, the analysis and the findings of this study. I can confirm that various aspects of the research process adequately and accurately represent my beliefs, perspectives and experiences and is therefore representation of the discussions we have had. During member checking, participants were given an opportunity to further explain or extend the information that they had already provided but none made additions (Mills, 2011). A member checking tool is attached as Addendum F

_____ Date:_____

ADDENDUM G

REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL OF P1 - COLLAGE CONSTRUCTION

1. **What were your thoughts and feelings before we began the process**

   I had no clue on what was going to happen and expected from me. However I was curious to knows ,to learn and to contribute positively to the expectations of the researcher.

2. **Feelings and thoughts during the collage construction exercise**

   It was exciting to collect diff pictures however, along the line I was emotionally hurt to interpret what those kids are going through and the environment they are coming from. Then it became an eye opener that I need to stand up and do something. The idea of enrolling for a course in order to gain more insight into different barriers to learning came in mind and also networking with other people in other provinces to get the best method of assisting

3. **During the discussions – what stood out for you?**

   It is the realisation that we as teachers, though we are aware of the difficulties ion the education system we are also very casual about it including the department as well, there is absolutely no sense of urgency to support learners with barriers.

4. **What surprised you?**

   I was surprised to see how calm other people are about this situation.

5. **What resonated with you?**

   Two things: Issues of affordability on the side of the parents. Secondly – the stigma attached when the learners attend special schools or classes in particular name calling by teachers sometimes. Results of that is learners loose trust and confidence in themselves and end up being the worst.

6. **What is your overall impression of the processes: Collage construction and the discussions?**

There is a lot to learn in life that requires growth from my side, development and maturity in order to reach out and touch someone's life and make a difference.

7. How can we improve our processes going forward?

I though we did not have enough time to expand and elaborate into depths. I wished that we could end the session with problem solving techniques that we can go out and implement and make a difference instead of just talking about the problem.

ADDENDUM G

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THE COLLAGE DISCUSSIONS	CODES	THEMES
51. what?..52 learners in the class, it's difficult to focus on that specific learner coz he needs that individual attention.	Individual attention	Overcrowded classrooms
52. Thank you for that, so what ..... is saying if I understand you correctly, is that one of the barriers that you have in your classroom is a		
53. learner who does not write but orally, who has comprehension, orally he gives the answers and when you assess him orally you get the		
54. desired results the only challenge is that now if you give him specific attention, the other class, you not able to give attention to the rest of		
55. the class		
P2 59. yes, that's correct		
60. ok		
P3 61. coz giving a learner, it's difficult to give attention to one learner as you are expected to finish a certain topic in a specific given time but	Specific time to cover the ATP	Curriculum and ATP
62. supporting the learner does help one-on-one		
63. Thank you for that. ….., over to you mam		
P3 64. Ok, my situation is that , I'm also a maths teacher by the way, my situation is that learners from grade three coming to grade four class		
65. not being able to comprehend the English and the home language that they used before so now, when you giving them you say this is		
66. addition, you must go back and explain to them addition in their home language is, so the LoLT that you are using has to be provisioned		
67. with code switching in class. Oh..ok. So here we have a problem of code switching because now they have to change the LoLT		
P3 68. Yes		
71. Alright, thank you eh….., the situation that you are faced with?		
P4 72. So, in my case, I go with overcrowding. Overcrowding is a problem, I actually can't access all the learners and give support to all the		
73. learners because of overcrowding. So I think if we can increase the number of mobile classes and reduce the number of learners in the	inclusion is difficult to implement	Perceptions on inclusions
74. class it could work and it's gonna lead to inclusion. So, in reality inclusion. In reality inclusion is difficult to implement		
75. How many learners do you have in your in your class?		
P4 76. 52		
77. And you are teaching grade?		
P4 78. Grade 2		

79. Yhoo…that's a lot P4 80. So it's actually really difficult		

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THE PROJECT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THE PROJECT GROUP DISCUSSIONS ***FIRST MEETING WITH FOUR COLLEAGUES***	**CODES**	**THEMES**
…….1……..Good morning colleagues. Thank you for joining the meeting I really appreciate it. Good to see …….2……..you all. Hopefully you can recall from our orientation meeting that our study consists of three …….3……..cycles, today we are on the second cycle. The purpose of this cycle is to answer the secondary …….4……..research question: What strategies do teachers currently utilise and could teachers develop to …….5……..capacitate themselves to provide interim support to learners awaiting DBST intervention? …….6. ……Remember in our last session we broke, we agreed that we will break this session into two so …….7……..that we'll have two questions that will ultimately answer this one. And as might remember, if you …….8……..don't here are the two questions so I suggest that we start with the first session like we did the …….9……..last time and then come to the second question. The first question that we are answering in this …….10……discussion is: *What strategies do teachers currently utilise provide interim support to learners* …….11……*awaiting the DBST intervention?* so we are going to discuss what strategies you currently utilise …….12……in your classroom as you wait for the DBST to come and do intervention. I don't know if we have …….13……any volunteer to begin the discussion? Yes ....., over to you…oh not you? Sorry about that,		

…….14……who'd like start then? P3……15……*Ok, let me start, the strategy that I use in the meantime waiting for the DBST eh…ehm…just* …….16……*because you are forced to have the individual support plan for each and every learner, that is* …….17……*eh.. having barriers so according to the ISP eh.. you look at what the child is not able to do and* …….18……*then afterwards you develop that ISP so if you are teaching maths for an example; you start by* …….19……*teaching the whole numbers and then you that from the classwork, that the child doesn't do any* …….20……*well and then you must develop the individual support plan for that learner. Which the strategy* …….21……*that I use for that individual support plan is to Eh..teach the content of the lower grade. If the child* …….22……*is doing grade four or grade five I start by doing addition from grade two level and then going up* …….23……*instead of three digit numbers I use one digit number and if they master the one digit I go to the* …….24……*two digits and so on.* P2……25……*and then to add what my colleague is saying here, since we are full-service school, if the* …….26……*intervention does not work for the learner then we refer learners to LSE's where they attend pull* …….27……*out classes. And they would support a learner according to their barrier. In my colleague's case* …….28…...*if it's mathematics, then it's gonna be on mathematics.* …….29……Ok, …..	Scaffolding Pull out classes	

…….35…….*so it was a red rose. So I asked them: how is the rose? They said is red, so red is our adjective.* …….36…….*Pretty girl – how is the girl? Pretty so pretty is our adjective. Small pink house. How's the house?* …….37…….*Small and pink. So they first see it before I put it within the lesson so it makes much easier when* …….38…….*the kid can see what we are talking about before I even start letting them write down something.* …….39……*I want them to understand the concept first with the poster that it has pictures then I go into "*		

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THE WORLD CAFE

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THE WORLD CAFE: TABLE A			CODES	THEMES
P4	1	*Welcome to table A colleagues, I'm gonna be your host for today. So, the question we are answering now for the next*		
	2	*twenty minutes is: What should be done which is not done, to support teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting*		
	3	*specialised DBST intervention? So, colleagues who would like to answer the question first?*		
P6	4	*I'll go first. So, I think that based on the findings neh…teachers should use scaffolding more to support learners awaiting*		
	5	*specialised DBST intervention. So, what should be done is… What should be done which is not done… is that teachers should*	Scaffolding	Teachers should know their learners well
	6	*know their learners very well neh, what the learners are capable of, their level of competency… so that they can categorise*	Categorise correctly	
	7	*them accordingly and scaffold them correctly.*		
P4	8	*You know what colleague, errr… scaffolding is a good strategy but how will I know exactly where the child's level is at, at the*		
	9	*moment?*		
P3	10	*Errr… remember that at the beginning of each and every year, we do baseline assessments. So that we can be able to gauge*	baseline assessments.	
	11	*your learners' capabilities and competences, and by doing that you simply know at the beginning of the year that this learner*		

	12	*needs this type of support, and this learner needs this type of support.*		
P6	13	*Yes. So, I think the best way of gauging the level, the learners' level of competency is to first teach or revise the concept at*	first teach or revise the concept	
	14	*hand before testing them on the concept neh. In that way you are sure that you are assessing the concept that you have*		
	15	*taught, therefore, your results are more reliable than just assessing before teaching only to find out that the previous teacher,*		
	16	*from the previous Grade never touched on that concept because these learners emmm… we must remember that we come*		
	17	*from Covid, they were rotating and they've lost a lot of time and not all concepts were taught. Like what happened… so, like*		
	18	*what happened during Covid when the ATP was trimmed, there's obviously concepts that were not taught, cos of the trimming*		
	19	*of the ATP.*		
P3	20	*So, you are saying as a result, you can't just jump into the baseline assessment?*		

ADDENDUM H


THE SITUATION IN OUR CLASSROOM
COVID-19
SBA Coverage
100% JOB: TOO MUCH TO DO, NOT ENOUGH TIME
Overcrowded.
LACK of DISCIPLINE
Corporal Punishment
Training
Workshop
Development
Learn
Skills
TRAINING
Coaching
Teaching
Knowledge
RETEACHING
CODE SWITCHING
Inclusion: Myths and Misconceptions
Patience
7 in 10 teachers believe parents are not involved enough in their child's education.
Pull-Out System
WHAT IS WORKING
OUR EMOTIONS AND THOUGHTS
LOST
VERY LOST
LACK OF DIRECTION
HOPEFUL
FRUSTRATING
Inclusion is difficult to implement
My child is no mad

ADDENDUM I

University Editor

Certificate of comprehensive English editing

This document certifies that we edited the manuscript indicated below for English language, grammar, spelling, clarity, and scholarly writing style

Manuscript Title:

A collaborative approach to developing the capacity of teachers to provide interim support to learners awaiting District Based Support Team intervention

Author:

B N MKWANAZI

Date Issued:

21 November 2022

The author's subject matter contents and intentions were unaltered during the editing. Manuscripts with this certification should be grammatically ready for publication; however, the author/s have the final choice to accept or reject our suggestions and changes. If you have any questions regarding the edited document, kindly contact info@uedit.org or visit us at https://uedit.org

Singed by the editor  **in Pretoria**

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Chief Executive Officer: A Apostolides BA (UNISA), MPhil, MA (*cum laude*), PhD (University of Pretoria)