



Exploring project-based learning as an effective support
tool for educators teaching learners with an inhibited
English proficiency



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DECLARATION

I declare that "Exploring project-based learning as an effective support tool for educators teaching Grade 9 learners with an inhibited English proficiency" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This work has not been submitted to another institution for examination.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of project-based learning (PBL) as a support tool used by educators who teach Grade 9 learners who experience limited proficiency in English. The study's main goal is to investigate how educators can help learners who learn English as a second or third language and thus have limited competency in it. The sample size of 12 educators was used in this study. These 12 educators teach Grade 9 learners and have used PBL previously. There is typically no other option available to these learners than to attend an English-medium school. The study's main objective is to examine PBL as an instructional aid for Grade 9 non-language courses. Towards the end of the school year, grade 9 learners are given the duty of choosing a course. Limited English proficiency in non-language subjects can impact a learner's likelihood of selecting a subject. For this reason, Grade 9 learners are selected to support their academic performance as well as to make sure they select subjects they enjoy and excel in. In South Africa, we lack the necessary resources to guarantee that every student can get instruction in their mother tongue until the completion of their academic journey. The South African Schools Act and the South African Constitution serve as the foundation for the Language in Education policy, which determines the language used in classrooms. The policies outlined in these publications suggest that school governing bodies are chosen by the schools. The language that the school will use for instruction and learning is decided by the governing board. For example, the demand of the local community or the learners who enrol in the school must be taken into consideration when deciding whether to use English as the language of instruction and learning. Even with modest implementation, there are still insufficient schools providing instruction to learners in their mother tongue. The research methodology for this project will be qualitative in nature. Both individual interviews and questionnaires will be used to gather data. Several schools in Johannesburg South will host this. Select educators at the chosen schools will be those who work with Grade 9 learners who have limited English ability. According to this study, PBL helps students who struggle with their English skills advance academically. PBL was chosen by several study participants as a support tool to help students become better academically. This study revealed the need for early planning and intervention. Educators need assistance and direction when implementing PBL.

KEY TERMS

PBL; limited English proficiency; support tool; the language of learning and teaching; home language.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BICS	basic interpersonal communicative skills
CALP	cognitive academic language proficiency
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FET	Further Education and Training
LoLT	language of learning and teaching
PBL	project-based learning
ZPD	zone of proximal development

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction and background

In this chapter the main ideas regarding this research are discussed. This study was motivated by the role the researcher played as an educator who experienced difficulties in the classroom with the language proficiency of learners. After working with several learners who came from different backgrounds, it became apparent that those who did not speak English as their first language required assistance. Since these learners learned in an unfamiliar language, they required support using a unique approach. While these learners proved to be as academically inclined as those who were proficient in English, their ability to complete standardised assessments in the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) hindered their performance. Additional motivation for the study arose from the generally held assumption that educators cannot provide learner support in the classroom during teaching, and this should rather be addressed outside the classroom.

The study focussed on project-based learning (PBL), a learner-centred approach used in classrooms with learners encouraged to work independently and gather their own information to complete the projects. The educator remains available for assistance and guidance throughout the process. This type of pedagogy carries many benefits for learners in multilingual classrooms. Learners would be encouraged to use their mother tongue through independent work. They would be able to comprehend material in their mother tongue and then translate it into English thanks to this. The research objectives of this study would be achieved if this methodology is suitable and helps learners who encounter a limited English proficiency to comprehend and assimilate content more effectively.

1.1.1 Understanding PBL in the classroom

PBL is closely related to John Dewey's work that inquiry-based learning helps learners to gain a deeper understanding of content (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2005). This form of learning is closely related to Lev Vygotsky's theory that development in learning can occur if it happens within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD describes the gap between what a learner can accomplish on their own and what they can accomplish with help from an adult or more experienced peers (Kurt, 2020). It is important to note that PBL may stand for project-based learning or problem-based learning. In the case of this study, I have used PBL as the abbreviation for project-based learning.

1.1.2 How PBL is used in education

PBL is a pedagogy that differs from traditional instruction. PBL focuses on “content learning rather than on specific language patterns, learner-centred learning, collaboration, authentic integration of language skills and allows learners to demonstrate their understanding of content knowledge through an end-product” (El-Henawy & Ali, 2015:414). In other words, instead of worrying about spelling words correctly or using the proper tenses, learners cover the material relevant to understanding the work, thereby placing more emphasis on content acquisition than language skills. In the case of this study, the focus will be placed on PBL as a support tool. PBL is immersive and has had huge success in the development of communication skills and critical thinking among second language learners (Wolpert-Gawron, 2018). Martinez (2019) postulates that PBL equips learners with such 21st century skills as creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking, however, there seems to be a gap in assessing whether PBL could be used as a learning support tool. Moreover, Humalda and Zwaal (2016) believe that PBL prompts learning that is aimed at expanding and elaborating learners’ understanding and competencies.

1.1.3 Characteristics of PBL

Learner collaboration is a characteristic of PBL deemed relevant to this study as it implies that learners will engage with one another during the PBL process (El-Henawy & Ali, 2015:414). Learners vary from academically from stronger to weaker, and each could learn from another – taking away information they would not otherwise get in an educator-centred classroom. The characteristic of focusing on content rather than language means that learners feel less pressure to recite information word-for-word. PBL also links the use of English in the classroom to real-life contexts allowing learners to practice the use of the language outside the classroom environment.

PBL has gained momentum in schools worldwide in recent years (Martinez, 2019). This approach has been used as a tool to improve learning. It leads to a learner-centred approach which enables learners to become accountable for their own learning. As learners develop autonomy over their learning they are, in turn, motivated to learn (Friedman, 2020). In the context of learning, autonomy occurs when “learners are no longer passive; they have become actively engaged and responsible for their learning development” (Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019:272). When learners are given control over their own learning, they are afforded a sense of independence, ownership, and self-worth. This does not mean that the educator is eliminated, however, as the educator is available for guidance and support of learners. Educators also provide useful, constructive feedback ensuring that the learner remains motivated.

PBL allows learners to practice autonomy by relying on previously acquired knowledge irrespective of the language in which this content was learned (Latham & Mead, 2016). As shown by Vygotsky, learners

construct their own understanding of the content based on their prior experiences, the learning environment, and their active engagement in class with peers, meaning that knowledge is constructed socially and contextually (Kurt, 2020). Thus, PBL presents an opportunity for learners to improve their academic skills. It explores the content and links it to the learners' interests (Martinez, 2019). Since PBL has a less rigid structure, learners and educators can implement a flexible approach. Educators can choose how to implement the pedagogy in their classroom by, for instance, allowing learners to choose a topic and encouraging collaboration between classmates.

1.1.4 PBL as a teaching tool in multilingual environments

An example of PBL could be assigning Grade 9 learners the task of building and presenting a 3D model of an animal or plant cell in the Life Science classroom. The educator assigns learners a topic and they are given the autonomy to decide how they will complete the assigned task. The educator can provide simple guidelines as to what is expected. Learners choose who make up their groups and work together to build their 3D model. Learners are also required to present the model to the class. Learners collaborate, engage, are creative, and discuss the different parts of a cell. As they work together and communicate with their peers to finish the assignment, learners expand on their existing knowledge and create a knowledge base. When working together, learners are using their linguistic abilities to communicate with one another (Barak, 2020).

PBL draws on constructivist pedagogy, which means changing the traditional classroom educator-centred approach to one that is learner-centred (Poonpon, 2018). Constructivist pedagogy is derived from the constructivism theory that learners create their understanding of content based on what they already know and what they have been presented with as new knowledge. The theory explains that learners construct their knowledge through interaction (Barak, 2020). Learners are exposed to peer engagement whilst collaborating. As Vygotsky explained, a child learns through their interaction with the world around them rather than by merely mirroring the world around them (Kurt, 2020). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory stipulates that children attain their knowledge through interaction and dialogue with others. Usually, these interactions are with people who are more skilled and knowledgeable than they are (McLeod, 2019). Vygotsky characterised this more knowledgeable other as anyone who displayed a superior understanding than the learner, especially in respect to a particular assignment or concept. Customarily the more knowledgeable other is thought of as an instructor or an adult, but this can be not always be the case (Royal, 2015). The group members should include someone or several members who are proficient in English. The Vygotskian theory of social learning and constructivism is the basis for PBL which involves a continuous "collaborative process of planning, engaging, reconstructing, presenting and reflecting" (El-Henawy & Ali, 2015:414).

Vygotsky postulated that language development occurs during social interactions and that assisted learning guided by an adult or skilled tutor within the ZPD resulted in better understanding (Kurt, 2020). PBL adopts a guided learning approach where the educator is only seen as a facilitator. Learners who are introduced to PBL will be guided by collaborating with skilled peers and by their educator, thus allowing them to attempt parts of the work on their own and within their ZPD.

Some educators believe that PBL is only appropriate for high level achieving learners while others consider PBL necessary for low level achieving learners. PBL can, however, be used for any learner regardless of their achievement level (Wolpert-Gawron, 2018). PBL is meant to be used to elevate any learner's language proficiency in the LoLT. Proficiency refers to an advancement in knowledge or skill, therefore, language proficiency refers to knowledge and skill in a language. When this proficiency is limited, content is misunderstood. In classrooms where the LoLT is not the 'first language of learners, teaching becomes difficult and not all learners understand what is being taught (Shayne, 2020).

1.1.5 Challenges of multilingual classrooms in South Africa

Owen-Smith (2012) says that learners who “repeatedly fail due to language barriers while learning, run the risk of developing low self-esteem” (p. 34). According to Owen-Smith (2010), a learner's self-confidence and sense of self in society is undermined when the LoLT is not their home language, and this is exacerbated by the experience of repeated underachievement. When learners are demotivated and have no confidence in their academic and language abilities, they tend to underperform (Preeti, Behmani & Singh, 2016). In South Africa learners are taught in their home language until Grade 3 and, thereafter, their first additional language – which is usually not a language they are familiar with or fluent in – becomes the LoLT (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019).

In South Africa learners may encounter multilingualism in the classroom when an educator uses more than one language to teach. Not all educators are able to do this, and many are not fluent in indigenous languages. Multilingualism could help learners achieve at their best, however, it may benefit some and disadvantage others. This is particularly so as multilingualism in the classroom – or code switching – does not always meet content requirements. It has been suggested that due to the need for community and economic development, the skill of understanding more than one language is necessary in South Africa (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019). Multilingualism does, however, make the implementation of language policies tricky as many of the indigenous languages have several terms for certain words.

Learners who speak African languages at home in South Africa are often disadvantaged due to their limited English language proficiency. Some learners are taught in their home language in Grades R, 1, 2, and 3, shifting to English-only education from Grade 4. This highlights that the Language in Education Policy is not

in line with the basic human right in the Constitution of South Africa (1996) which states that every learner has the right to receive education in their chosen language. Many learners attend schools that implement English as the medium for learning and teaching (Shayne, 2020). Learners who are not proficient in the LoLT are more likely to fall behind in understanding new content (Friedman, 2020). According to Fawole and Pillay (2019), English is the preferred medium of instruction in South Africa. Both parents and learners choose this language over their mother tongue despite having a different home language. English is seen as a global language and intellect is often equated with one's proficiency in the language. Language, as a medium of communication, created a divide within the education system during the apartheid era in South Africa (Stein, 2017). The realities of the pre-1994 apartheid Bantu education system contributed to the poor educational performance in South Africa (Webb, Lafon & Pare, 2010) Currently, obstacles need to be faced which were created during apartheid and which perpetuate the same difficulties. For instance, many South African rural schools are under-resourced and do not have educators who can teach in the preferred choice of language (Van Staden, Bosker & Bergbauer, 2016). According to Lafon (2009), although many black and coloured learners received education in Bantu languages until the end of the primary band, they were then given no choice but to attend a secondary school where the medium of instruction was either English or Afrikaans. Today, learners must complete their schooling by writing the National Senior Certificate for which most exams are offered in only English or Afrikaans (Lafon, 2009). Despite the underlying principle of the Language in Education Policy, which is to maintain home language education, many South African learners still receive education in English or Afrikaans, the second language of 80% of these learners (Van Staden *et al.*, 2016).

CALP refers to a learner's ability to understand and express concepts and ideas both in writing and orally, which is necessary to succeed academically in school (Cummins, 2008). It has been suggested that a learner requires six to eight years of instruction in their home language to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Prinsloo, Rogers & Harvey, 2018). They also suggest that further research is required to determine the mismatch between home language and the LoLT.

Basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) refer to a learner's ability to have a conversation fluently in a certain language while CALP refers to a learner's ability to communicate and understand effectively through written and oral modes relevant to school performance. For instance, reading information from a textbook would require CALP. Both BICS and CALP will improve when the language of instruction is the learner's home language. When they lack CALP, learners fall further behind as they cannot grasp the fundamentals of the content of a subject (Cummins, 2008).

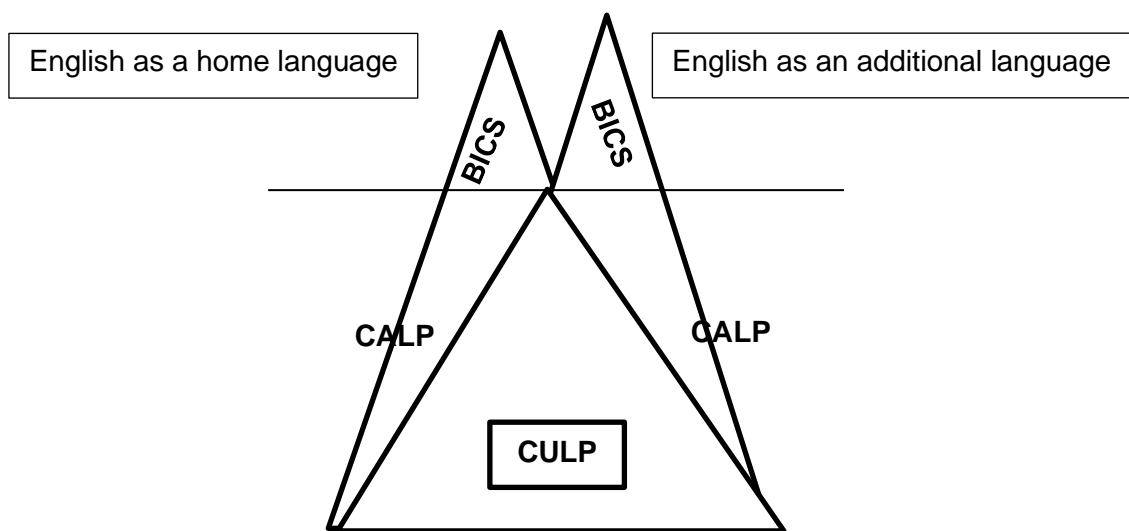
In Mozayan (2015), CALP represents the capability that learners need to be able to engage effectively in ordinary conversational encounters. BICS typically involves relevant, context-integrated scenarios that do

not require much cognitive processing power. According to Cummins (2008), pupils who are learning a language also pick up a set of implicit metalinguistic information and skills that are useful when working in a second language and this is known as common underlying language proficiency. Another description of common underlying language proficiency, the iceberg model of bilingualism proposed by Cummins (2008), also assumes that only the cognitive and reading skills known as CALP are transferable between languages.

As seen in Figure 1.1, the two icebergs represent two languages, which overlap and share an underlying operating system which is the deep structure below the surface of the water. Despite certain conceptual similarities, the two languages are distinct above the surface, or on the outside. Furthermore, this figure can show how the working memory of bilingual people organises their linguistic knowledge. Specifically, it stores each language's unique pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar skills, and the concepts are stored as the shared underlying proficiency.

Figure 1-1: Understanding the acquisition of English as an additional language

Adapted from Kover, Pat and Hetty Roessingh (2003)



1.1.6 Why using PBL can benefit multilingual classrooms.

As a learning support tool for learners with limited proficiency in English, PBL allows them to explore content in their home language. Learners are encouraged to engage and collaborate on tasks. Learners in high school often choose to collaborate with those who have the same interests and communicate with others in their shared home language. Learners who share the same home language do not, however, necessarily share the same proficiency in the LoLT. When using PBL, the aim is to teach content and not language alone by integrating a social approach, exposing learners to other learners who have a stronger proficiency in the language of learning and teaching (Krajcik & Shin, 2014).

Learners should be educated in their mother tongue for as long as possible (Ball, 2011). The advantages of mother tongue instruction greatly outweigh the disadvantages, including enhancing academic success and helping children gain confidence in their abilities (Ball, 2011). Post-apartheid, changes in the education system allowed previously disadvantaged learners to attend public schools of their choice. Despite these changes and the stipulations in the Constitution of South Africa (1996), many learners are still not afforded the right to be taught in their home language (Friedman, 2020).

The contentious issue of education in one's home language is a concern for many learners in South Africa today. Despite the struggle for home language education, by the end of 2018 it was found that most South Africans preferred English as the language of instruction in schools and in tertiary educational facilities (Gordon & Harvey, 2019). According to BusinessTech (2020), there were approximately 8 096 schools in South Africa in 2020, 6 483 of which were English medium schools. With 23% of the population having English as their home language and 80% of the country's schools operating as English medium schools, there is a dearth of schools that accommodate the majority and their home language (Saneka & De Witt, 2019)). Despite isiZulu being the home language of 26.3% of the population, and being widely spoken throughout South Africa, many learners are taught in English (Gordon & Harvey, 2019; Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019). In addition, 65.1% of learners learn English as their first additional language. Despite the need for home language education, learners and parents still opt for teaching and learning to be delivered in English.

Using English as the LoLT for learners with different home languages disadvantages them severely. PBL, however, allows learners to pair the LoLT with their home language and can be of great benefit to them. Language, and in this case, English, is taught as a language subject and is also used as the LoLT in all other learning areas. When learning a language, the distinction between home language and the first additional language is made, however, the same distinction is not made when learning other subjects like maths and science (Fawole & Pillay, 2019). The assumption that learners are proficient in English because they learn and are taught English, filters into thinking that the same learners are fluent in English across all subjects, including those that are non-language subjects. Even though English may be their second or third language, learners are unrealistically expected to be able to understand the content of any subject taught in English.

For learners to be successful in all learning areas, they need to obtain proficiency in the medium of instruction. Thus, learners who are proficient in the medium of instruction have an advantage in language and non-language learning areas whereas those who do not have such proficiency in the LoLT have added pressure to understand not only the content but also the language that the content is being taught in. If learners were afforded the opportunity to continue their schooling in their home language, they would not

encounter the difficulties currently being experienced. According to the Language in Education Policy, the aim is to maintain home language education, however, learners switch to mostly English instruction in Grade 4 (Van Staden *et al.*, 2016). Many schools cannot accommodate learners who wish to continue learning in their home language as there is a lack of resources, infrastructure, and expertise to accommodate these languages.

In South Africa, various studies investigated language proficiency and the link to academic performance, including one which examined the impact of language proficiency on learner performance, particularly in science (Prinsloo *et al.*, 2018). The findings revealed that language played a pivotal role in the academic success of learners. The political and educational history of the country has, however, obscured the issues of language resulting in further problems that need to be addressed.

While the literature is abundant on the barrier's learners face, no notable study or literature based on PBL as a support tool is available for educators to use for learners who present with limited language proficiency. Some of these barriers include not acquiring reading and writing skills (Ramcharan, 2009), misinterpreting content of all other subjects as language proficiency is required to understand the content, and social exclusion (MacKay, 2014).

1.2 Rationale for the study

The rationale of this study is based on current experience in the field of education. As a high school educator who worked both in the public and private schooling system, the researcher experienced the barriers to assisting and supporting learners who were not fluent in the LoLT. The researcher also experienced how a learner's understanding and enjoyment of a subject affected their subject choices at the end of Grade 9. Although this is the rationale, reflexivity is considered during this study. In doing this research the findings could aid those who can make use of the information to improve their knowledge and policies. It seems important to promote a support tool that educators can use, especially considering the delays in providing education in all official languages across all subjects for learners in South Africa. The focus was on educators who teach Grade 9 learners. The rationale for choosing educators who teach Grade 9 learners is based on the importance of subject choices that are made towards the end of this grade. Through this study, learners, although they attend an English medium school, can be supported to reach their potential and make the correct subject choices at the end of Grade 9.

1.3 Problem Statement

Manyike and Lemmer (2014) believe that academic achievement is heavily influenced by the learner's skill in the medium of teaching. Thus, PBL is intended to inspire and motivate each learner to perform at their best. PBL creates opportunities for learners to use their home language skills in a meaningful context thus allowing them to use the knowledge they already have regardless of the language of instruction (Latham & Mead, 2016).

In view of the above, it would be beneficial to the field of study, educators, schools, and learners to know what tools could be used to improve the understanding of those learning in a language in which they have limited proficiency. Research suggests that the language factor is underestimated in underperformance (Friedman, 2020; Harmse & Evans, 2017). Teaching pedagogies have not been designed to consider the occurrence of learning through a second or third language medium (Owen-Smith, 2012). Harmse and Evans (2017) also highlight that many novice educators do not realise that the learners seated in their classes are not first language English learners and many of them have little exposure to the English language outside of the school setting. Learners who cannot practise the language which they are most familiar with are disadvantaged and unlikely to perform to their best of their ability. This raises concerns whether PBL can assist educators who teach learners with limited proficiency in the English language.

Many learners do not acquire English other than at school and only during classes. The implementation of other languages, such as the African languages, as the LoLT has been hindered due to the assumption that there is a lack of teaching materials, workforce, and resources required (Fawole & Pillay, 2019). In PBL, learners are exposed to the concepts and focus of a topic through the implementation of the project. This does not require a prescribed language and therefore the learner will experience the learning in their chosen or home language (Ponpoon, 2018). The aim of this study, therefore, was to explore whether PBL could be used as an effective support tool by educators to assist learners who experience limited proficiency in the LoLT and, in this case, English. The focus was on educators who taught at English medium secondary schools in the South of Johannesburg, and who taught Grade 9 learners. The rationale for choosing educators of Grade 9 learners is based on the importance of subject choices that are made towards the end of this grade. Grade 9 learners are prompted to select subjects that interest them. Many learners who underperform in non-language subjects tend to make incorrect subject choices based on their negative experience. It is important to note that when Grade 9 learners make subject choices, they are encouraged to choose subjects they not only enjoy but in which they also perform well. If educators can address underperformance in non-language subjects using PBL this may assist learners to make the correct subject choices. It is important to note that this study did not intend influencing subject choices but rather to ensure

learners base their decisions on a true reflection of their ability and interest in the subject without being influenced by their proficiency in the medium the subject is taught in.

1.4 Research Statement

The purpose of the study was to explore and assess PBL as a learning support tool that educators could make use of when teaching Grade 9 learners who experience limited proficiency in English.

1.4.1 Main Research Question

How can PBL be used as an effective learner support tool for Grade 9 learners who experience limited proficiency in English in their non-language subjects?

1.4.1.1 Sub-questions

The need to support Grade 9 learners who have limited proficiency in English prompts the following questions:

- What is the educator's understanding of learner support?
- How do educators identify learners who require support in their classes?
- What relevance does proficiency in English play in the educator's subject?
- What is the educator's understanding of PBL?
- Which support tools are currently being used in the classroom to bridge the gap for learners who are not proficient in the medium of instruction?

1.4.2.2 Research aims and objectives.

This study intended to explore the effectiveness of PBL as a support tool for educators who teach learners with limited proficiency in English. Many learners who struggle with English proficiency also struggle to understand the content of other subjects because the same medium of instruction is used. After implementing PBL, analysis and investigation was done to determine whether PBL made a positive contribution and provided support for learners who had limited proficiency in English. Educators gave their opinions on the influence PBL had—whether favourable or unfavourable—on learners' comprehension of the material. The focus was on the performance of learners in non-language subjects and not specifically on the performance of learners in language subjects. The reason for this is that when learners make their subject choices towards the end of Grade 9, educators can ensure they are making the correct decisions based on their ability and preferences and not purely on their negative experiences of a subject due to their limited proficiency in English.

The aims of this study were achieved by pursuing the following objectives:

- To explore how academic performance is affected of Grade 9 learners when the medium of instruction is not their first language. Educators provided information on underperforming learners in their subject and whether the learner was a first language learner of the LoLT or not.
- To investigate how educators implemented learner support for learners in Grade 9 with poor English proficiency. This was done by gaining insight from questionnaires completed by educators and during follow-up interviews. Current learner support methods were explored and assessed for effectiveness in the pursuit of addressing the language proficiency aspect.
- To determine whether PBL could be used by educators as an effective learning support tool for Grade 9 learners experiencing limited English proficiency. This was done by obtaining feedback from educators who made use of PBL in their subject area over time. The performance of limited English proficiency learners as assessed by the educator was analysed before and after the implementation of the PBL.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a research study provides the foundation of all knowledge for the study (Grant & Osanloo, 2015). The theory that relates to the concepts and issues highlighted in this research will be underpinned by the social constructivist theory.

Lev Vygotsky, a social constructivist theorist, believed that all teaching and learning involves sharing and conferring socially obtained knowledge (McLeod, 2019). In other words, learning takes place through social interactions and guidance from knowledgeable and experienced people. This learning usually occurs within the ZPD. During PBL, learners collaborate and share ideas with their peers. This facilitates the process of socially obtained knowledge.

The unification of thinking and language processing is highlighted in Vygotsky's work (Kurt, 2020). This refers to the combination of thinking about and processing the information in one's own language. The Vygotskian framework postulates that a child's ability to learn is not based on successfully fulfilling a developmental stage but on the responsive social interaction between an adult and child. This learning is, however, scaffolded and guided. Scaffolded learning entails guidance from an educator or skilled person (McLeod, 2019) who makes constant adjustments to accommodate a learner's ability and level of performance. Vygotsky emphasised the importance of social interactions for learning (Blake & Pope, 2008). According to Vygotsky's theory, every learner first learns through person-to-person interaction, internalising this and eventually leading to deeper understanding (Blake & Pope, 2008). Vygotsky also postulated that learners learn best in their ZPD. This refers to learning that takes place when social interaction occurs with

more knowledgeable others, and which allows development to occur. Someone more capable, such as an educator or peer, assists the learner to complete the task at hand. Whilst PBL is learner centred, there is an element of collaboration and group work where a learner will be exposed to other learners who know more and can share their knowledge in a scaffolded manner. The social interaction during PBL is assumed to assist the learner with a weaker proficiency in English.

This shared knowledge needs to be new knowledge and not knowledge already obtained. Vygotsky's theory correlates with a learner-centred classroom. PBL is learner-centred and correlates with the expectations of Vygotsky's theory.

PBL allows learners to gain autonomy over their learning. This means that learners are given the opportunity to take ownership of their learning and build their understanding. Learners are given the freedom to choose how to start and finish a task. Individuals seek understanding through their experiences (Creswell, 2014). PBL allows learners to seek understanding through the process of completing the project. Learners interact and form their meaning and understanding of concepts. Concepts would relate to topics covered in the classroom. Learners are not left to their own devices, though, and are guided by the educator and knowledgeable peers.

Information must be presented in a constructivist manner when using a constructivist approach, enabling learners to build on prior knowledge and promoting further investigation of future knowledge. The social constructivist approach used in the classroom encourages interactive learning, meaning the learners build on what they already know. The teaching is learner-centred, and the educator becomes the facilitator, adapting the content to the level of a learner's English proficiency.

1.6 Research Methodology

1.6.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm refers to a set of beliefs that guide the research study (Creswell, 2014). It determines the choices the researcher will make throughout the study and what they will observe.

The intended research paradigm for this study is interpretivism. This paradigm envisages that the outcomes of the study will be based on the personal opinions of the participants. Interpretivism will thus determine the effectiveness of PBL as a support tool for learners with limited proficiency in English (Ryan, 2018). For example, educators will use a PBL activity to support learners with limited English proficiency. Each educator will experience and interpret the effectiveness of the PBL activity differently. Interpretivism is subjective and avoids the generalisation of the findings.

This study's ontological presumptions are derived from the researcher's own experiences working in the educational field. The researchers' experience includes working with and exploring the effects of English proficiency on academic success. The encounters led to presumptions, which is what inspired the need to investigate this topic. This study's epistemological presumptions draw on the theories of social constructivism and interpretivism.

The researcher's values serve as the basis for the axiological presumptions. The option to participate and withdraw at any time without consequence was provided to participants. All participants could voluntarily participate, and data collection happened whenever it was convenient for them. The researcher tried to remember that their background and culture shouldn't affect the findings of the study. It is crucial for researchers to consistently maintain professionalism and ethical standards. All the research participants were allowed to stay anonymous.

The decision to make use of a qualitative research approach placed a strong emphasis on the value of comprehending various viewpoints and people's subjective experiences. The goal of qualitative research is to produce new knowledge and insights and that reality is socially constructed. In this instance, the researcher carried out a qualitative investigation to find out how PBL can assist Grade 9 learners who experience an inhibited proficiency in English.

1.6.2 The research design

Creswell (2014) defined a research design as the type of inquiry that researchers choose to make use of throughout their study. The research design provides direction for the study. The findings derived from qualitative research extend the literature or create a call for immediate attention and action. Creswell (2014) also stated that we make use of qualitative research to ensure that we can have a complex, detailed understanding of the issue or problem. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) indicated that there can be more than one approach to this type of research as all types of qualitative research have common attributes.

The strategy of inquiry is the plan the researcher will use to gather the information that will allow them to answer their research question (Jansen, 2020:21-33). Creswell (2014) explained that a phenomenological approach describes the lived experiences of the participants of a study. This study will utilise a phenomenological approach as the strategy of inquiry to establish the effectiveness of PBL as a support tool for learners with limited proficiency in English. In other words, it will examine how the educators experience the effectiveness of PBL as a support tool for learners with limited English proficiency.

Qualitative research will therefore be relevant for this study. According to Crossman (2020), qualitative research is research that collects non-numerical data and seeks to interpret the meaning that helps us understand social life through the study of targeted populations.

Data was collected in a natural setting in which the researcher was the primary data collector. The data collection, analysis, and interpretation continued throughout the research process. For Myburgh and Strauss (2012), in gathering the data the researcher must be sensitive to the issue under investigation. This means that the researcher took all data gathered into consideration. Any data that could illuminate the problem and further the aims of the study were included.

1.6.3 Research Methods

1.6.3.1 Participant selection

According to Myburgh and Strauss (2012), a study's population is selected from the target group's attainable members. The intended population for this study was 15-25 educators who taught learners with and without limited English proficiencies at secondary schools situated in Johannesburg South. The schools included lower and upper-class schools. The population targeted by this research were educators who taught Grade 9 learners with limited English proficiency. These educators would be able to provide the richest data as they will be experienced in the field. In addition, these educators had the experience of the relationship between a learner's English proficiency and academic performance. Accessibility to this population and site was applied for through the Department of Education. (refer to Annexure A).

All COVID-19 regulations and standard operating protocols were adhered to. The Department of Education as well as the schools were requested to provide these protocols to ensure the study was conducted in accordance with the expectations and safety requirements set out. Where possible, data gathering mediums used online platforms such as Teams, Zoom, or Microsoft Forms.

The sample group was selected from the target population. The sample was made up of a portion of the population and were involved in the research, meaning they were part of the research process (Myburgh & Strauss, 2012). Pietersen (2014:155-170) explained that purposive sampling is done with a specified purpose in mind, and this was the sampling technique used in this study. Along with the sampling technique, a criterion sampling method was used. The criteria were based on the experience of educators, the grades taught by the educator, and the subjects taught. These educators were purposefully non-language subject educators. Of this population, a sample group of 12 educators were used. This sampling method was used to ensure that the richest possible data was collected. The richest possible data refers to data that would

provide the most relevant and viable information in terms of this study and not superficial data that would state the obvious.

1.6.3.2 Data collection (methods, strategies, and instruments)

Qualitative data collection strategies include interviews, questionnaires, observations, and interview document analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This study implemented individual questionnaires, observations, and open-ended question follow-up interviews. Follow-up interviews are utilized to collect information on lived experiences; in this instance, the educators' experiences and opinions regarding PBL implementation were included (Myburgh & Strauss, 2012). The data collection methods were aimed at obtaining an understanding of the participants' views and opinions of PBL. The follow-up interviews included observations and open-ended questions.

The reason for choosing to include questionnaires was to understand how limited proficiency in English affected learners academically and how the educators addressed this problem, as well as to establish or identify this problem. Follow-up interviews were requested by the researcher. These interviews were semi-structured. Notes were taken during the follow-up interviews and this formed part of the data along with the completed questionnaires (refer to Annexure B for a questionnaire example). Structured, open-ended questionnaires were distributed to educators who participated. The aim was to gather as many educators' opinions about PBL and the limited proficiency in English amongst learners as possible. These questionnaires were analysed and used in relation to the findings.

1.6.3.3 Data analysis

Data analysis begins with the initial reading of the literature about the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data analysis requires making sense of what you have collected, therefore, the researcher must ensure that the correct data collection procedures were administered so that thorough data analysis can take place.

Myburgh and Strauss (2012) provide the following guidelines on data analysis techniques.

Interview data was sorted and grouped by identifying themes and patterns. The data was analysed and interpreted. The data was first be grouped and identified according to themes and patterns and then the researcher made sense of it. Niewenhuis (2014: 47-67) describe analysing qualitative data as making sense of the perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, and feelings of the participants based on the phenomenon under study. Dominant, frequent, or significant themes were recorded and grouped. Inductive analysis eliminates the opinions of the research or any theoretical orientation (Niewenhuis,

2014:47-67), thus these themes were derived from the inductive data analysis where research findings emerged from the dominant, frequent, and significant themes highlighted.

Documents included were questionnaire answers, observation notes during follow-up interviews, general field notes, reflective notes after interviews, and notes made during individual discussions with participants. The documents were analysed and interpreted. Commonalities were highlighted to reduce data.

Questionnaires were analysed, and information organised according to commonalities and themes or patterns.

1.6.3.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is important in qualitative research (Niewenhuis, 2014:47-67). In qualitative studies, trustworthiness refers to the degree of accuracy of data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. Korstjens & Moser (2018) describe the following points as part of the trustworthiness of a research study.

Credibility – this refers to the accountability of the research process as a whole and includes the preparation and planning done before the research commences. In this study the researcher carefully planned the research process before commencing the research process.

Transferability – this refers to the ability to use the findings in a similar context. It is important to note that the transferability of the study should not be forced by the researcher. The researcher of this study ensured transferability by outlining the background of the research as well as the underlying presumptions.

The dependability of the research will greatly depend on the variability of the information. The researcher in this study achieved dependability. The researcher aimed for dependability of the study by documenting the exact procedures followed for gathering, analysing, and interpreting data and gave sufficient background information about each component, so that the study can potentially be repeated by other researchers and provide reliable findings.

Confirmability – refers to evidence of the research process that is available for an auditing process to be conducted. Is the information available to other researchers to confirm? The data collected in this study was solely based on what has been gathered and not made up by the researcher or interpreted through their own perspectives and ideas. The researcher's goal in this study was to use an authentic approach to examine PBL in a way that hasn't been done before.

1.6.3.5 Role of the researcher

Niewenhuis (2014:47-67) remind us that people have biases, however, the researcher should pay careful attention to this and make every effort to avoid their preconceived ideas and thoughts influencing the study. The researcher should stay objective throughout the study. In this study the researcher was actively involved in the collection of data and the interpretation thereof. Qualitative researchers are actively involved in their study as they want to understand and interpret the participant's experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This role was guided by reflexivity. Reflexivity is referred to as the ability to understand one's perspective and the role it may play in the research. It is important to keep in mind that the data collected should drive perspectives rather than that of the researcher's preconceived ideas or perceptions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

As an educator who has experienced difficulties when teaching learners who are not fluent in the LoLT, the researcher's perspectives and opinions had the potential to influence the study, however, they needed to remain objective. The researcher also needed to respect the opinions and views of the participants. Before this study, the researcher was responsible for designing and analysing the questionnaires, arranging individual interviews, performing observations, and keeping field notes. The participants were made to feel comfortable and welcome when interviews were conducted.

In a qualitative study data collection is unstructured and open-ended (Creswell, 2014). Due to the qualitative character of the study, it was expected that the process would deviate from the plan, but it was crucial for the researcher to be ready and have the tools needed for the data gathering procedure on hand. During these interactions, data was recorded, and extra care taken to ensure that the researcher's previous work experience, perceptions, and views did not influence the interpretation of the information provided by participants.

The researcher needed to immerse themselves in the data collected so that they could analyse and understand the information and data gathered rather than relying on preconceived ideas or perceptions. Niewenhuis (2014:47-67) explains that qualitative study data is usually based on the experience of the participants and the research findings, therefore the researcher must ensure an inductive analysis of data. The main purpose here would be to allow themes to emerge without any influence. As the researcher, the views and opinions of the participants were placed above my own and the aim of the study was always be kept in mind. Lastly, the ethical considerations were kept in mind throughout the study.

1.6.3.6 Ethical considerations

All research is intended to produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher kept ethical considerations in mind throughout the study. The risk level of this study was low, including potential discomfort or inconvenience for the participants. In other words, participants could be pressed for time or become bored during the research process. These risks were easily addressed and mitigated by the researcher. The researcher ensured that the interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants. Participants were assured that confidentiality was important and could choose not to be identified in the study. Since this study aims to benefit the participants, it was important to ensure that they were not left worse off by the findings and results of the research. Educators who participated in this study should ideally be able to use the findings to their benefit and to expand their knowledge in terms of learner support, the tools to use for learner support, limited English proficiency learners, and the use of PBL.

Participation was voluntary. Only if the participant requests that their information be published in the research would it be acceptable. The researcher gave everyone a fair chance to be part of the research. The criteria to participate were stipulated and made available. Considering this study, the criteria highlighted the aims and objectives of the study. Sound reasoning for excluding language educators and including only Grade 9 educators, for example, were clearly stated. Participants were given the option of withdrawing from the study at any time without any consequences. Before the interviews took place, all questionnaires and material were submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education to obtain ethical clearance. The researcher ensured, among other ethical clearances, that approval was received from the site and the participants, that the participants remained anonymous, and the information shared was confidential.

Informed consent was obtained. Participants were informed of the nature of the research and the implications of partaking in the research process. Informed consent was not rushed, and participants were given sufficient time to decide whether they would like to participate in the study. Participants needed to understand the information pertaining to the study and be well informed about the risks and benefits of partaking in the study. The vulnerability of partaking in the study was clearly explained and participants allowed to practice autonomy. Once informed consent was obtained, participants were regularly updated and reminded of the nature of the study. This was a continuous process throughout the study. Participants were not lured into participating using coercion, undue influence, or inappropriate incentives.

1.7 Preliminary Literature Review

According to Creswell (2014), the literature review assists the researcher to determine whether the topic they have decided on is worth exploring and studying. It is also a guide to what still needs to be researched and explored.

The purpose of the preliminary literature review in this study was to provide insight into the effectiveness of PBL as a learner support tool. Specific focus was placed on learners who experience limited English proficiency. The literature study was guided by the objectives of this study:

- To explore how the academic performance of Grade 9 learners, for whom the medium of instruction was not their first language, was affected.
- To determine whether PBL could be used by educators as an effective learning support tool for Grade 9 learners experiencing limited English proficiency.

1.7.1 How was the academic performance of Grade 9 learners, who were not first-language speakers of the medium of instruction, affected?

Case (2003:2) defines limited English proficiency as an official term used to identify learners whose English proficiency is not yet developed enough to allow the learner to comfortably participate in an English-only environment. Learners in South Africa are usually taught in their home language in Grades 1 to 3 and make the switch to English-medium education in Grade 4 (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

According to Prinsloo *et al.* (2018), South African learners continue to perform poorly with language proficiency being a contributing factor. It was also highlighted that learner performance was negatively affected by language proficiency more often than by social factors such as access to water, electricity, or well-resourced schools. During the 2014 Annual National Assessments, it was reported that the overall lower achievement of Grade 9 learners indicated that learners were negatively compromised in later school years and found it difficult to bridge the foundational knowledge gaps.

1.7.2 Determine whether PBL can be used by educators as an effective learning tool for Grade 9 learners who experience limited English proficiency.

According to El-Henawy & Ali (2015), PBL is an effective pedagogy allowing learners to make use of English in an informal setting and ensuring less anxiety is experienced. This allows learners to confidently build their self-esteem, language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities. During his research, Martinez (2019:3) established that PBL aims to improve learning outcomes based on a learner's skill set.

Nel, Nel and Hugo (2018) indicate that educators do not always know how to teach learners who are learning in their second, third, or fourth language. Thus, the need to understand and be able to deliver learner support is pivotal in addressing the underperformance of South African school learners. Mays (2000) uses the working definition of learner support as interventions that can be made up of a variety of activities, mediums, and support staff at different stages of a learner's progress.

1.8 Contribution of the study

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature and inform and assist educators, schools, and school districts on the academic impact that limited English proficiency has on Grade 9 learners and how to support those learners by using PBL.

The significance of this study is that it aims to provide information on how to use PBL as a support tool for learners who experience limited English proficiency. The current climate throughout South Africa is that we do not have enough schools facilitating their teaching in languages that are in demand. Learners are expected to understand content; however, they do not understand the language that this content is being taught in. Therefore, the hope is to provide practical information to mitigate the problem that the study aims to address.

1.9 Chapter division

Chapter One: The problem statement, research questions, theoretical framework, research design and technique, study contribution and justification, introduction and background, and chapter division are all included.

Chapter Two: PBL as a potential method for learning support for learners who struggle with English proficiency. It is necessary for the researcher to review literature that supports their work. This section's goal is to present what has been researched thus far and what remains to be investigated.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology. How will the researcher conduct the research? What methods will be used?

Chapter Four: Data analysis and interpretation. The researcher will be required to analyse and interpret the data collected. From this, the researcher will derive findings.

Chapter Five: Summary, recommendations, limitations of the study, and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to this study. A comprehensive overview of what PBL entails and the historical background thereof are offered. The development of PBL as a support tool for learners who experience poor language proficiency is discussed and the influence of language proficiency on academic performance is reviewed.

2.1.1 Understanding the need for learner support

South Africa is known for its harsh past and the long-term influences of apartheid. In terms of education, the aftermath of the apartheid era has had a lasting effect. Due to the poor English proficiency of many learners, their basic right to education is not fulfilled (Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016:9). According to The Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support, which is utilized by the Department of Basic Education, learners should be placed in schools based on whether they require low, moderate, or high levels of support. (Department of Education, 2014). Many learners with low support needs find themselves in mainstream schools. *The Education White Paper 6* (Department of Education, 2001) encourages the support of learners, despite being in a mainstream school and whether they have low or moderate support needs, however, due to various constraints such as staff availability and accessibility to the grounds as well as a lack of resources, this has not materialised (Hodgson & Khumalo, 2016:11).

In some schools, the class sizes are unmanageable, and the educator is left with no choice but to continue working through a curriculum that not all learners can benefit from. Matsepe, Maluleke and Cross (2019) estimate that class sizes range from 20 to 50 learners in mainstream schools. Many learners are expected to cope with the pace the work is presented at despite their need for support. They are also all required to write and complete the same assessments. The learners who require support do not receive it and this hinders their academic progress (Kriel & Livingstone, 2019).

Learner support should entail the curricula being adapted and moulded for accommodation of different support needs. Educators and support staff should be able to do this in a mainstream or special school, however, in practice this is difficult as schools do not have the appropriately qualified persons to implement this (Dreyer, 2013). *The Education White Paper 6* emphasises the need for inclusion in schools. Inclusion refers to identifying and accommodating the various needs of learners and using their similarities to build

upon. It also states that inclusion is about providing support to all learners and educators. This is imperative to ensure that a variety of learner needs are met and accommodated. Lastly, inclusion focuses on overcoming challenges within the system. These challenges make it difficult to meet learner needs and thus adaptation should be the main aim of learner support (Department of Education, 2001).

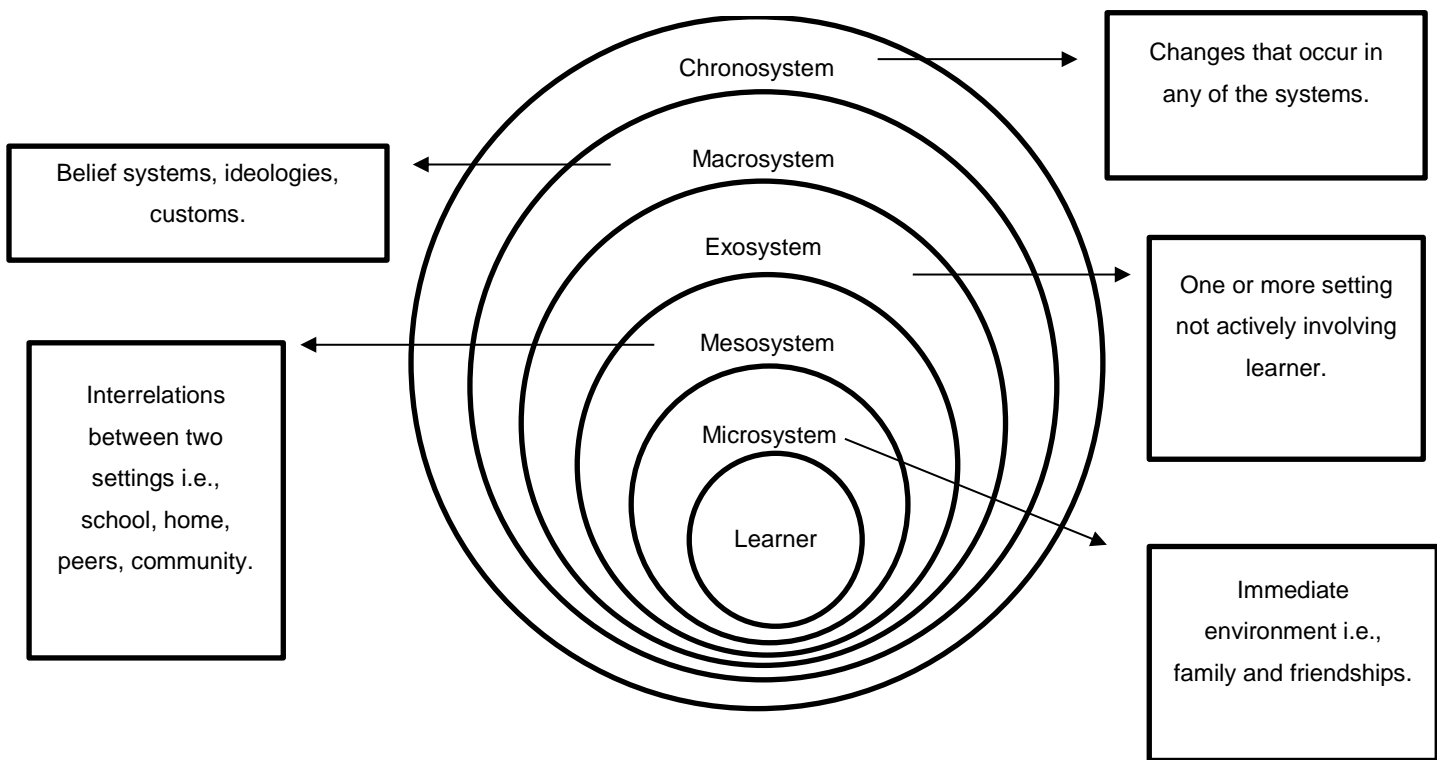
2.1.2 Learner support needs in a mainstream school

As found by Hodgson and Khumalo (2016), learners who have little to no support are placed in mainstream schools. There are, however, still learners who need support and find themselves in mainstream schools due to constraints of space and accessibility to special schooling in and around South Africa. As discussed earlier, with the establishment of inclusive education after the apartheid era, learners have been placed in schools on the premise that the schools would be able to accommodate and adapt to their needs regardless of the support required. The way educators teach and the approaches they choose to use are what makes education inclusive (Yoro, Fourie & Van der Merwe, 2020:3).

In this context learner support refers to the methods and pedagogy used to enhance and elevate the school system to accommodate and adapt to the diverse learning needs of learners. Yoro *et al.* (2020) believe that learner support is a contested term. The learner support one would require in a remedial setting varies from that of the learner support required in a mainstream setting. A remedial setting would require a medical diagnosis and procedure to be followed whereas in a mainstream setting, learner support could refer to the acknowledgement of learning ability potential based on a socio-ecological model.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model can help us understand where the need for support amongst learners stems from. Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:4) investigated how the ecological aspects of seven Eastern Cape schools influenced the implementation of inclusive education. They found that the implementation of inclusive education was not only impeded by the school environment but by all the systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (as shown in Figure 2.1) is made up of five different systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework



Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:6) found three systems within the microsystem – the parent, peer, and school system – that had the most influence on them. Many learners came from unsupportive home environments with parents who were not actively involved in their schooling. Some learners were subjected to poverty due to their parents' low levels of education and their consequent struggles to find employment. Furthermore, Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:6) found that some learners were raised by their grandparents and their low levels of literacy hindered the academic performance of the learners as there was no help or guidance for the learner to perform optimally. Some parents did not show sympathy towards their children, with lifestyles that resulted in the neglect of the children; and some parents come across as being in denial as they felt that owning up to the reality that their child experienced a learning barrier would reflect badly on their parenting abilities. It was also highlighted that learners who did not have strong peer bonds were stereotyped and labelled by their peers because of their perceived lesser abilities. It was said that schools were not accommodating microsystems for learners who experience barriers to learning. This was due to the lack of resources and support in the schools. Thus, learners who experienced barriers were not given fair opportunities to partake in the class activities.

As for the mesosystem aspect, the study revealed that because the school and parents did not share a relationship, learners did not see how the valuable contribution of a workable relationship between the two parties could benefit them and their academic success Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013:9).

The exosystemic aspect involves the school management team, institutional level support team, the school governing body and the district-based support team. An important point to highlight from the study conducted by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) is that school management teams did not display enough commitment to the management and administering of learners who experienced barriers to learning. The school management team members believed learners who had barriers to learning should be placed in schools that accommodate only those barriers and should not be placed in mainstream schools.

There was no operational institutional level support team, and the school governing bodies were neither involved with nor concerned about the implementation and adaptation of policies that could benefit the learners with barriers. Lastly, although the district-based support team should be equipped with support staff able to provide services for learners who experience barriers, this was not the case. Educators and the schools were not provided with training or upskilling opportunities to support those with barriers to learning (Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013).

The macrosystem comprises policies and structures that provide frameworks and guidelines for implementing ways to accommodate learner barriers. The Constitution of South Africa (1996), the South African Schools Act, *The Education White Paper 6* and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) documents all provide clear guidance on how to accommodate learners and implement strategies for their optimal performance. The loophole, however, is that the CAPS document and *The Education White Paper 6* do not complement each other. CAPS focuses on the assessment and curriculum for mainstream schools and learners and does not allow for adaptation to accommodate barriers to learning as stated in *The Education White Paper 6*. Again, this is to the detriment of learners with barriers to learning.

The chronosystemic aspect involves the necessary actions and requirements needed to ensure learners with barriers to learning are accommodated. Unfortunately, in the case of the Eastern Cape area investigated by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013), the necessary advancements have not been made. This resulted in learners at those schools becoming lost in the crowd and their barriers were neither seen to nor accommodated and supported to ensure their optimal academic performance (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013).

In another study investigating learner support the development of vocabulary in a second language in the classroom was best described using Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (Kotzé, Van der Westhuizen & Barnard, 2017). The study focused on how Vygotsky's learning theory was embedded in Bronfenbrenner's

ecological systems theory, showing that learners exist within a microsystem within a mesosystem, embedded in a macrosystem. The researchers emphasised that learners learning in second and third languages should be supported in each system (Kotzé *et al.*, 2017).

Kotzé *et al* (2017) mentioned that the direct result of the interaction that takes place within the ecosystem are a result of specific processes and mental structures and thus place emphasis on the role that language plays in cognitive development. We can assume that support needs to be implemented across the systems to ensure the learner can grasp the content in the medium of instruction despite it being their second or third language.

2.1.3 Limited English proficiency amongst South African learners

Sirisrimangkorn (2018) emphasised the importance of English as a vehicle for communication, claiming English was a necessary foreign language used by second-language speakers to communicate with each other. In South Africa, many learners have limited proficiency in English.

Manyike and Lemmer (2014) postulated that language was important for learning and teaching worldwide. They also supported the notion that proficiency of the learner in the language of instruction greatly determines their academic success.

Prior to the end of Apartheid in 1994, English and Afrikaans were considered the language of choice in schools despite most Africans having other languages as their mother tongue. The Constitution of South Africa (1996) promotes additive bilingualism. To this day, however, parents prefer to enrol their children in English-medium schools due to the appealing nature of English across the country and globally. According to Nugraha (2018:571), many parents regard English as more important because it will allow them to “secure their children’s social and financial future, they believe that being proficient in English is preferable in the job market and studies cannot be completed at secondary and tertiary levels in an African language”. Thus, these reasons give rise as to why it is important for learners to obtain proficiency in English.

Nugraha (2018) has also established that even with isiZulu being the most widespread language used in South Africa, it is not feasible to use it as a language of instruction as there are insufficient human and language resources. According to international benchmarking assessments, like *The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*, underachievement amongst learners is due to the language related difficulties experienced (DBE, 2023). Many learners in South Africa, especially those of colour who make up 80% of the education population, learn in an additional language – specifically, English – and need to use that language to master all other academic areas regardless of their proficiency (Manyike & Lemmer, 2014).

According to Prinsloo *et al.* (2018), language proficiency is a contributing factor to the continued poor performance of South African learners. It was also highlighted that learner performance was negatively affected by language proficiency more often than by social factors such as access to water, electricity, or under-resourced schools. The 2014 Annual National Assessments revealed the overall poorer achievement of Grade 9 learners, indicating they found it difficult to bridge core knowledge gaps. This demonstrated how language competency affected learners later (Prinsloo *et al.*, 2018).

Navsaria, Pascoe and Kathrad (2011) emphasise the difficulties educators and learners experience in South African schools due to language barriers. They found that many non-English home language learners who attended English-medium schools had little exposure to English outside the school environment. In the same research, it was found that when learners were exposed to English from a young age, the transition between a home language and another language was not as difficult and bore fewer academic consequences (Posel & Zeller, 2011). Learners who were not exposed to English from a young age needed to backtrack and acquire both CALP and BICS. Posel and Zeller (2011) found that while 65% of adult South Africans were proficient in their home language, only 47% were proficient in English.

2.1.4 The influence of proficiency in the LoLT on academic progress

Prinsloo *et al.* (2018) investigated the impact of language factors on learner achievement in science and concurred that proficiency in the medium of instruction was necessary for academic achievement. The authors noted that due to South Africa's educational and political history the issues of language have been obscured and while there have been advances in education, achievement amongst learners remains poor (Prinsloo *et al.*, 2018). Results indicated in The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study indicated that learners were underperforming and found it difficult to transition to higher grades with the gaps they had in their academic skills (DBE, 2023). Posel & Zeller, 2011:124 and Prinsloo *et al.*, 2018 mention that many learners are forced to switch to English as their LoLT before they had mastered the basics in their home language during the first three years of schooling. It was highlighted that this transition to English from the home language as the medium of instruction would be more beneficial if done between Grades 6 and 8. Learners who make this switch too soon continue to struggle academically throughout their schooling career. The studies also confirmed that teaching that takes place in the home language could reduce the underdevelopment of language and literacy skills in academic studies.

2.1.5 Defining PBL

Although PBL is closely related to the works of Dewey and Vygotsky, there is no specific evidence that confirms who designed PBL as a teaching pedagogy and when it was implemented, however, it has been an alluring teaching method since the mid-1800s. Al-Busaidi, Yusuf and Reinders (2021) explain PBL as a

method that has been used to bridge the gap between learners and their lives beyond the classroom since the mid-1960s. It is also said that PBL are central projects and are not necessarily peripheral to the curriculum (Essien, 2018).

Poonpon (2018) found that PBL is different from traditional instruction as it places a lot more importance on learning that is, learner centred. PBL activities focus on content learning and activities that result in learners collaborating and engaging with fellow learners and allow learners to demonstrate problem-solving regardless of their language proficiency (Poonpon, 2018).

PBL research has increased in nations like Thailand, where students are regarded as second language learners and are only infrequently exposed to English outside of the classroom. Due to their limited English proficiency, learners in this area found it difficult to finish activities, and PBL had a major impact on the participants' learning abilities (Poonpon, 2018).

Almulla (2020) researched the effects of PBL and noted that responsiveness was vital to the learning process. Since PBL encourages significant responsiveness of learners this resulted in favourable opinions of the process from both learners and educators.

Driving questions are at the core of the PBL design principle. It is important to revisit the driving question throughout a project to ensure that learning outcomes are being met (Condliffe, 2017). During the implementation of PBL, learners collaborate, and this method of teaching has proven to improve English language skills as well as creating a positive learning attitude amongst learners (Essien, 2018). The advent of PBL has been widely positive and substantial.

PBL, as Dewey's theory of learning whilst doing proposes, has proven to be advantageous for learners learning a foreign language (Dewey, 1966). Bas and Beyhan (2010) believed that PBL was useful for good academic performance.

Dewi (2016) found that learners have proven to have positive responses to PBL techniques which resulted in them becoming more likely to participate in class. The use of PBL also changed learner behaviour as they became more confident when speaking English which assisted them during the learning-teaching process.

2.1.6 PBL as a support tool for limited English proficiency

Much of the research done regarding PBL as a support tool for learners with limited English proficiency has taken place in countries like Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. There is little evidence of PBL being used in South African schools to improve the proficiency of English.

My, L., Hang, N., Thao, N., and Oanh, D. (2020) investigated how using PBL as a useful tool in English as a Foreign Language instruction could help students become more motivated. They discovered that providing EFL learners with resources and scenarios from real life helped them improve their language usage and reading comprehension. Compared to typical teaching methods and practices, study participants had more opportunity to utilize English while completing the project. They also discovered that successful learning cannot occur in the absence of a learner's desire to learn.

Krajcik and Blumenfield (2006) recommend PBL as it has resulted in learners achieving higher scores compared to methods used in traditional classroom settings. They found that PBL could be applied across the curriculum to improve the performance and results of learners. In their study Syarifah and Emiliasari (2019) found that PBL could help learners develop their ability and creativity in writing narrative stories, including improving their understanding of the topic, their knowledge of the assigned genre, the structure of the text, and the language features.

A study on learners for whom English was not their home language found that not only did PBL have a significant positive effect on the learners' speaking ability, but it was also an effective pedagogy as it allowed the learners to be actively involved and innovative whilst completing the task (Mafruudloh & Fitriati, 2020). In this study, the scores that the participants achieved in the pre-test compared to the post-implementation of PBL test scores portrayed an improvement, with post-test scores higher for those who were taught using the PBL method than those who were not taught using the PBL method (Mafruudloh & Fitriati, 2020).

Although researchers of PBL report positive and similar outcomes from the implementation of the method, several challenges may be experienced, including obstacles arising from the beliefs and current practices of educators. Factors which could impede the successful implementation of PBL include the teaching process, attitudes, time constraints and group dynamics (Al-Busaidi *et al.*, 2021).

Not many people enjoy or adapt well to change. Introducing PBL requires a change in the mindset of both the educator and learners (Al-Busaidi *et al.*, 2021). Another challenge may be experienced when PBL is inconsistent with assessment protocols and practices in place at the time (Al-Busaidi *et al.*, 2021). In addition, many educators may not be familiar with PBL and might require training to implement this method. Implementing PBL requires the educator to take on a new role as a facilitator rather than the source of knowledge. Over and above the challenges identified, another challenge that needs to be considered is the availability of support tools and materials in the South African context.

2.1.7 PBL as used around the world

PBL has been used in various ways around the world with the aim of enhancing academic performance. Some examples of the implementation of PBL are discussed below.

Torres and Rodriguez (2017:64) research findings revealed that PBL motivated learners to improve their language ability as they needed to do this to help them complete the task. Scaffolding was evident in their study as learners had to figure out their own ways to make sense of the task. Scaffolding can be linked to Vygotsky's theory of ZPD and is a type of support for the learning process. Based on the learner's requirements, it seeks to support the learner to achieve learning objectives as they move through the ZPD (Kurt, 2020). It implies that the teacher has found suitable tasks related to the specific learning needs of the learner and the cognitive outcomes that must be achieved. This specific study demonstrates that PBL is learner centred, whereas normally the lessons would be led by the educator. It emphasises that learners continuously ask questions to fill in the gaps they experience. Lastly, the participants were in the ninth grade and this correlates with this research study's target group. The use of PBL in this project resulted in positive outcomes.

Poonpon (2018) investigated enhancing English skills through PBL. In this study learners were tasked with improving their English ability through the implementation of a project. The project allowed learners to integrate their language skills and their content knowledge which assisted them in completing the tasks. There was, however, a request by the learners for better preparation before the project was given to them. Thus, the implementation plan of the project could be examined and adapted to ensure the learners feel better prepared. In closing, the verdict was that PBL does enhance the language skills of learners through project-based activities. This study highlighted the importance of preparedness and implementation. It also resonates with scaffolding as each learner required different assistance at various stages of the project. The use of PBL in this study provided insight and recommendations on what to do to achieve the best positive outcomes.

Syarifah and Emiliasari (2019:87) investigated PBL to develop learners' ability and creativity in writing a story. In their investigation they found two main positives, specifically the development of the skills and creativity learners needed to write the stories, and the learners' perceptions of PBL. Both points proved that PBL was beneficial. Learners understood the task as they were given the opportunity to choose their topic and thus had prior knowledge, they were confident in. After the project was complete, it was established that learners had a better understanding of the narrative genre. Moreover, the learners reported that PBL allowed them to form groups and work together with others who had different strengths. It also allowed them to share roles, collaborate and assist each other with personal difficulties.

2.1.8 Support tools currently being used by educators in South Africa for language proficiency

Learners of school-going age are introduced to academics using their mother tongue, however, from Grade 3 onwards many learners receive their education in English, a language that is considered foreign to them. Not only do these learners lack BICS but they also tend to have very little experience and exposure to CALP (Cummins, 2008). As discussed in Chapter 1, BICS and CALP can be improved when home languages are used as the language of instruction. Learners who are not taught in their home language lose out on the necessary CALP required for academic progression and this results in them falling further behind as they are unable to grasp the fundamentals of subject content. Learners who are not first language learners of the LoLT often struggle with understanding class material like worksheets and using non-verbal communication as they lack the necessary BICS. Learners not proficient in the LoLT often struggle with activities such as writing reading and listening due to poor CALP (West Middle School, 2016).

Learning is a challenge for many South African learners who do not speak English as their home language and have no other choice but to attend a school that implements English as the LoLT. Learner support tools include worksheets, extended activities, textbooks, pilot study handbooks supplied by the Department of Basic Education and extra lessons. Within the South African context and considering the socio-economic standards of families and school learners as well as the challenge with geographical distribution of resources, the country is in dire need of better support tools that will not cost large sums of money which learners and parents do not possess (Prinsloo *et al.*, 2018).

2.1.9 Challenges educators face in South Africa with regards to learner support

Educators battle with crowded classes, time constraints and very few resources to assist the learners who struggle with the LoLT language barrier. Learners who struggle with English as the LoLT do not receive assistance at home as their parents, siblings, guardians, or elders are also not fluent in the language. Hence, their exposure to the language is usually limited to the classroom environment. The classroom environment can be daunting for learners especially when there are those who are evidently more skilled in the language (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018:15). Poonpon (2018) emphasises that methods such as PBL allows learners to continue using English outside the classroom despite the accessibility at home and Sirisrimangkorn (2018:15) supports this by proving that PBL is an appropriate tool for individuals who are in a mixed ability class because individual creativity and talents can be highlighted.

As in Vygotsky's theory, exposure to interaction with someone skilled in the aspect during learning results in a better understanding of the content. PBL correlates with Vygotsky's theory as it allows learners to collaborate and interact with peers and classmates. Learners who require further assistance, attention, and guidance in understanding content also require alternative resources, tools, and approaches. The simple

reiteration of content does not assist the learner to understand or grasp the information. A different approach must be implemented. Learners and educators alike are reliant on teaching and learning resources and tools.

Educators are encouraged to make use of their own designed resources to assist learners. Many of the planning done by educators is guided by policies and documents such as CAPS and the level of ability of their learners. It is impossible to create one single resource to assist and accommodate all learners. Training of educators in this regard is also lacking within South Africa (Clarke & Ried, 2013).

2.2 Summary

This chapter reviewed existing literature on learner support and how this is implemented in mainstream schooling. English proficiency amongst South African learners was discussed and how this proficiency influences learning and teaching. PBL was also discussed and how it has been previously used to assist learners with language proficiency and as a support tool. Lastly, the chapter highlighted support tools currently being used in South Africa to address language proficiency and what challenges are experienced in the South African classroom.

The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in addressing the questions of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the qualitative investigation took place providing insight into the research design, population and sample, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, as well as the ethical considerations of the study. Methods used to investigate this study were chosen to understand PBL as a support tool for learners with limited proficiency in English. An overview of the research methodology implemented for this study is provided in Chapter 1. This chapter further informs us of the research design used in this study.

A qualitative approach to data collection was used, using open-ended questionnaires and interviews which were analysed using document analysis of transcribed interview recordings. Questionnaires allowed for first-hand, primary information to be gathered from experienced educators who had witnessed the difficulties experienced by learners with limited English proficiency. Document analysis was done after questionnaires and interviews were completed. During the analysis of the interviews and the questionnaires, trends and patterns across the population and samples were identified. This information allowed the researcher to actualise the objectives and aims of the study, namely, the effectiveness of PBL as a support tool for learners who had limited proficiency in English.

3.2 Research Design

The research design provides direction for the study. Creswell (2014:41) states that we make use of qualitative research to have an in depth understanding on an issue or problem. There are several commonalities in the way we can implement qualitative research as stated by Merriam and Tisdell (2015:52). They also mention that the researcher makes sense of something in which they actively engage in, thus in this research, once the questionnaires were completed, it was easier for the researcher to understand how effective this tool was, as the educators would have already actively engaged with the tool in class. The information provided allowed the researcher to identify patterns and common key concepts.

The strategy of inquiry should help the researcher answer the research question (Jansen, 2020), hence a phenomenological approach was implemented for this study. A phenomenological approach commences with the hypothesis that the participants have different views and opinions (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2019). Once the participants had answered the questions in the questionnaires, the researcher was able to

understand each of the participants experiences when using PBL and how effective it was as a support tool for learners with limited English proficiency.

3.3 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is a set of beliefs that guide the research study (Creswell, 2014). The paradigm guiding this research was interpretivism. This means that the researcher used the information gathered through questionnaires and follow-up interviews to interpret the experience of educators when working with learners who require support due to their limited proficiency in English. Interpretivism aims to gain information from the primary source as it is seen as first-hand information about how the person interprets the scenario or activity (Creswell, 2014).

In this study, the interpretive paradigm was implemented through having educators answer questionnaires and provide their first-hand knowledge and experience. Experienced educators provided first-hand information about their experiences working with learners with a limited English proficiency.

3.4 Research Approach

The study followed a qualitative approach and encompassed an interpretive approach. This means that the aim was to understand how a particular process or phenomenon was perceived by the participants. According to Ary *et al.* (2019:420), qualitative studies allow for different research designs to be followed. A questionnaire was selected as the research design for this study. Thus, in this study, the aim was to understand how learners who experience limited English proficiency could be supported and how effectively PBL could assist these educators and learners and ensure academic progress. Based on the above information, the researcher chose to use a qualitative approach for this study, as it allowed for data to be collected from educators who had experience in using PBL. This ensured that the data collected was rich and first-hand from experienced educators who had tried and tested this pedagogy.

3.5 Participant selection

A purposive sampling method was used in this study. Ary *et al.* (2019:156) indicated that purposive sampling was a good method to implement in research based on attitudes and opinions. When using purposive sampling, it is crucial to include the selection criteria (Ary *et al.*, 2019:588). In this case the selection criteria were based on participants being those who teach Grade 9 learners in subjects other than English Home Language. In this case, the sample was chosen from the population of Grade 9 educators who taught subjects other than language subjects and those who had used PBL before. These samples were selected

as they provided the most relevant and specific information which allowed the researcher to answer the research question being investigated.

For the purpose, of this study, four schools in the Johannesburg South area were selected as sites to determine and understand the effectiveness of PBL as a support tool for Grade 9 learners who experience a limited English proficiency. The sample size derived from the population of 15 to 25 educators was manageable as the final number of participants selected was 12. This gave a good enough foundation for comparison. It is crucial to realize that the study's sample of schools was limited to those in the Johannesburg South District, and the findings may not be indicative of other schools in the area. As such, the findings should not be interpreted as a comprehensive assessment of all schools in Johannesburg South. It is important to note that this analysis and study is significant in understanding how PBL could assist learners who experience limited English proficiency as well as in contributing to prior, current, and future research.

3.6 Data Collection

Data was collected mainly through questionnaires. Permission to gather this data was obtained from the Department of Education (see Annexure A), the school principals, and the educators themselves. Educators were given the option to remain anonymous. Using questionnaires and an optional follow-up interview ensured anonymity was sustained throughout the data collection process (Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger, 2015). Document analysis was done by analysing the questionnaires and follow-up interview notes.

3.6.1 Data collection process

Data are bits and pieces of information and the data collected for this study was made up of information derived directly from the source (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data was collected through questionnaires and individual interviews. Questionnaires were provided in both hard and soft copy form. Questionnaires were structured and identical for all participants.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

As indicated in Chapter 1, data analysis began with the initial reading about the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data analysis requires making sense of what has been collected, therefore, the researcher ensured that the correct data collection procedures were followed so that thorough data analysis could take place.

In this study, data was analysed and interpreted using content analysis. Data was analysed as collected from the participants. Furthermore, data was studied and commonalities within the information were noted. Participant answers were grouped and categorised to ensure that the researcher could manage all the

information easily. The categories and commonalities were identified based on the research question. Content analysis is a method whereby content is analysed in a subjective manner through coding and highlighting patterns or themes (Abubakar, Douglas & Sani (2018).

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ary *et al* (2019:32) emphasised that once the researcher had gathered data and interpreted it, it was imperative to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the information gathered. Dependability is also important in qualitative research as the aims and objectives of the study can only be achieved if the researcher is able to use the information gathered. According to Ary *et al.* (2019:498) the validity of a qualitative study is dependent on the accuracy or truthfulness of the findings. Many researchers refer to this as the credibility of the findings. As stated in Chapter 1, the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are important elements of this study.

The credibility refers to the accountability of the research process as a whole and includes the preparation and planning done before the research commences. The authority of the researcher, interview notes, and transcripts are also important factors in the credibility of data. In this study, credibility was established through careful data collection, crystallisation, and a prolonged engagement to ensure the data was fully understood (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Crystallisation refers to describing the collected data in terms of what has emerged from the research and is not something rigid and set in stone (Niewenhuis, 2014:47-67). This approach ensured trustworthiness as it allowed those reading the data to recognise patterns. This could also include member checking. Member checking, also known as respondent validation, was implemented in this research to ensure credibility.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) describe member checking as a common strategy used in qualitative research. This entails the researcher soliciting the feedback by presenting the preliminary findings to some of the participants. The participants recognise their experiences in the researcher's interpretation and distinguish whether it is indeed a reflection of their experience, and they could suggest changes to the interpretations to better capture their experiences. Transferability refers to the ability to use the findings in a similar context and encourages researchers to make connections between their studies and their own experiences. For example, educators may use experiences in their own classrooms to link to theories that relate to education and teaching (Barnes *et al.*, 2005)

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) propose that qualitative research is done to better understand and explain experiences. Therefore, replication of a qualitative study will not produce the same results, and the main concern is rather whether the results correlate with the data collected. Thus, researchers need to ensure dependability by using a variety of methods to collect data. In other words, researchers should use two to

three different methods and if the data collected is consistent, this would then ensure dependability. In the case of this study, data was collected using individual interviews, observations, and questionnaires. If the data collected across these methods was consistent then dependability is evident.

Confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability have been achieved. It is important to remain open throughout the qualitative research process. It is vital for the researcher to take note of their personal feelings and emotions throughout the research process especially after an interview or observation. It is vital that the researcher follows the information provided through data collection and does not guide it. This will ensure confirmability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) emphasise that ethical issues become apparent when there is collaboration and sharing of knowledge during data collection. Data collected for this study has been provided by individual participants. Therefore, there is a low risk of ethical issues arising.

The researcher approached the Gauteng Department of Education and the various schools to request permission to conduct research. At the same time, the researcher provided the school with the approved proposal, the permission letters, the ethics clearance certificate and the consent and information forms for the educators. Upon granting permission to conduct the study, a request was made that the participants be given the researcher's contact details in the event they needed to contact the researcher before commencing the research. The dates for the data-collection process were set and the questionnaires collected by the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the methodology of the study and included discussion of the research design, research approach, participant selection, data collection, data analysis process and the ethical considerations relevant to this study.

The purpose of this study was to explore and assess PBL as a learning support tool that educators could make use of when teaching learners who experience limited proficiency in English, hence the researcher analysed and interpreted the qualitative data collected by means of questionnaires with twelve (n = 12) participants.

Table 4.1: Demographics of the participants

School	Participant	Age	Gender	Years' Experience	Subject
A	A	38	F	17	Business
	B	35	M	11	Business
	C	34	F	12	Accounting
B	D	51	F	20	LO and Creative Art
	E	25	F	1	Business
	F	51	F	24	Maths
C	G	31	M	9	Maths
	H	34	F	8	Geography
	I	39	M	16	Natural Science and LO
D	J	32	F	9	Natural Science
	K	27	M	2	Maths
	L	33	F	8	Natural Science

Table 4.1 demonstrates the demographics of the studies participants. There was a significant difference in the years of experience between the participants. There were four (4) male participants amongst eight (8) female participants. The subjects taught are also indicated in Table 4.1. The research targeted educators in mainstream schools who taught Grade 9 learners mainly because in this grade learners select the subjects, they are to continue with in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, and this influences their career choices and tertiary education opportunities. Educators who teach Grade 9 learners have first-hand experience of the learner’s proficiency in English, especially in the subject they teach in English. It is part of the rationale of the study to explore PBL as a support tool for Grade 9 learners who experience an inhibited English proficiency in non-language subjects.

4.2 Presentation and discussion of data

The findings of the study were classified into themes and categories to reflect the experiences of participants in terms of PBL as a support tool used for learners with inhibited English proficiency. The responses obtained through data collection were grouped together and analysed. Questionnaire transcripts were read and re-read.

4.2.1 Themes and categories

The main themes and categories were identified from the questionnaires as shown in Table 4.2. The same details that participants often brought up were highlighted to reveal themes. From these themes, data was categorised using criteria that participants again cited multiple times. Data was further categorised based on how the data related to the study's goals and objectives.

Table 4.2: Themes and categories based on participants responses

Theme	Category
1 Common signs that a learner requires support due to language proficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for taught content to be re-taught • Learner results and marks are low • Body language • Learners disengaged behaviour and lack of participation • Work ethic and completion
2 Barriers experienced by educators when supporting learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner interest • Time constraints • Parent involvement • Class sizes • Resources • Standardized testing

3 The importance of LoLT proficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is vital to understanding content • Learners who are not proficient are disadvantaged and underperform
4 Influences on Grade 9 subject choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Peers • Performance and ability in the subject • Enjoyment • Career choices
5 Benefits of using PBL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marks improve • Independence • Problem solving • Can request assistance during completion

4.3 Responses from the participants of the study

The following presents the participants' verbatim responses to the questionnaire.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Common signs that a learner requires support due to a language proficiency

Mays (2000) uses the working definition of learner support as interventions that can be made up of a variety of activities, mediums, and support staff at different stages of a learner's progress.

4.3.1.1 Need for taught content to be re-taught.

The participant responses indicated that many of them believed that learner support should be provided after content has been taught as the extracts below indicate.

Participant B: *“Providing assistance to learners that might not fully comprehend the taught content”.*

Participant C: *“Supporting learners outside of the normal teaching curriculum”.*

Participant D: *“To me it means getting to know your learners' character and their standard of work and then assisting them to understand tasks better or assisting them more after giving instructions if as teacher you know that child is a slow learner. Another example would be to assess work done and see if one could assist the learner to answer better for future tests etc”.*

- Participant E: *“Learner support would be to facilitate learning once the content has already been taught by the educator. The learner themselves would need to make an effort to understand and engage with the content themselves after it has been taught in a classroom environment. When the teacher facilitates this effort made by the student to understand concepts that they have not understood in the classroom, it can be referred to as learner support. During the classroom lesson, the teacher may also support a learner by scaffolding them into giving the correct answers. It could be a scaffold to correct thinking or to assist a learner to grasp ideas”.*
- Participant G: *“For me learner support encompasses both academic and personal support. On the academic front this would deal with learners who need additional guidance based on a lesson that was taught; a re-explanation of a concept previously taught; activities and practice questions that allow the learner to apply acquired knowledge into an assessment-based environment. Personal learner support would extend to barriers to learning that they experience – from home circumstances, emotional struggles or mental health issues that all hinder the learner in acquiring a full and holistic education”.*
- Participant I: *“The ability to assist learners with concepts that they struggle with above what is taught to all learners”.*
- Participant J: *“Offering guidance when learners are struggling with comprehension.”*
- Participant K: *“Learner support simply means that a teacher going out of his/her way to make sure that a learner gets enough help in order to master a particular concept or anything that is being taught.”*
- Participant L: *“Learner support involves additional time given to student who are struggling to help facilitate a better understanding and integration of knowledge regarding the subject content and focusing on core concepts and skills requirements.”*

The information above emphasises the need for content to be comprehended following initial presentation and instruction. As stated in Chapter 2 by Prinsloo *et al.* (2018), a key component of success is how well learners understand the material. Participants B and E drew attention to the fact that they had to reteach previously taught material because learners did not understand it. Mays (2000), however, considers that learning support ought to be given at every stage of the learner's development. Educators could try to design their lessons in such a way that they are accommodating majority of the learners.

4.3.1.2 Low marks and results

Participants of this study were asked what signs they looked for that indicated a learner required support. Many of the participants referred to a variety of signs, particularly low marks and results achieved by learners in their classes. Their responses are given below.

- Participant B: *“Asking learners questions during the lesson. Sometimes you can see in a learner's eyes that they are confused or don't understand something. Also, by looking at their marks and how they complete activities.”*
- Participant C: *“This is based on many factors, to name a few, concepts taught are not processed correctly by the learner, a pattern of continuous poor performance, language and other barriers to learning.”*
- Participant E: *“Body language, eye contact, playfulness in class and results. I usually like to ask for a student's opinion if they have been talking to fellow learners in class. Their answers to my questions also show me that they require support.”*
- Participant F: *“I use in class interaction, homework, performance in tests, reading of facial expressions and or body language and often learners feel comfortable enough to come and speak to me to aid them.”*
- Participant G: *“As a start it would be marks-based on formal assessment. Moreover, on an informal basis, homework and class participation by encouraging all learners to have a chance to engage in class is an easy way to identify a child requiring support.”*
- Participant I: *“Through question and answer in conversation and through assessment, checking of work and concepts while completing in class.”*
- Participant K: *“I normally see on their work ethic and the activities I would normally give them during lessons. Most important aspect that would make me identify such a learner is when I give them a formal assessment.”*
- Participant L: *“Initially, behaviour that is disruptive and a lack of participation in class is used as a predictor for me. Secondly is the low assessment results on numerous types of assessment including homework and class activities.”*

The answers given above support Owen-Smith's (2012) findings of underperformance. Learners who consistently perform poorly and receive subpar grades typically have low self-esteem. Participants B, C, F,

G, K, and L discussed how evaluating the low scores received on official tests helped determine the need for learner support. These indications allow educators to focus on providing learner support – one way to provide support is through the use of PBL. Educators only determine the need for learner support after assessments or post-presentation of information. This is considered a reactive approach.

4.3.1.3 Body language

The participants also referred to the body language that learners displayed which highlighted the learner required support. The participants responses are indicated below. The below participant as well as previously mentioned participants indicate that body language plays a big role in establishing whether or not a learner is grasping content.

Participant D: *“For me it is when they start fiddling or not focusing because it could mean they have possibly lost track of what is being taught. The state of the learners book speaks a thousand words. Body language and response in class can indicate if the learner is on board or not.”*

4.3.1.4 Learners disengaged behaviour and lack of participation

Another common factor which indicated that a learner needed support included learners who were disengaged and there was an evident lack of participation in class. The participants explained these in the responses below.

Participant A: *“Learners who don't willingly participate, those who struggle to grasp concepts after repeated explanations, those who struggle to complete tasks in certain time frames and those who are behavioural problems (act out to detract from lack of capability).”*

4.3.1.5 Work ethic and completion

Lastly, the participants mentioned that work ethic and work completion was a factor that indicates a learner required support. The participant's responses are given below.

Participant J: *“When a learner takes long to comprehend, complete tasks.”*

4.3.2 Theme 2: Barriers experienced by educators when providing learner support

Prinsloo *et al.* (2018) suggests that South Africa is in dire need of learner support tools and resources. Many educators in South Africa are reliant on resources and tools being supplied so they can provide learner support. Some of the common barriers experienced by this study's participants are indicated below.

4.3.2.1 Learner interest

Participants claimed that the learners who required support were not interested and did not show any interest in receiving support. Their responses follow.

Participant B: *“Finding the time to do it. Unwillingness of the learner to participate when additional help is offered. Parents are also not always interested or willing to help at home.”*

Participant E: *“For me the school curriculum does not allow much time for practical work, so I cannot see how my learners deal with real life scenarios and how they would apply theory learnt in class to the real world. I think that the learners who need support are those who are not strong 'book smart' learners. Yet, they have very good ideas and very good business understanding in the classroom discussions. I feel that it is very difficult to support a learner who is not very good at parrot fashion learning, because we need to support them in taking a test and being able to be assessed in a way that they do not have the abilities for. A learner who cannot take a test under pressure or cannot put their ideas to paper will not do well in a test. But this does not mean the learner is not capable of understanding the content, it just means they cannot be assessed in the standard way of testing that is done at school. We as educators are trying to coach learners into taking assessments in a certain way because that is the requirement, so not only are we trying to get the student to understand content, we are trying to force them into a mould that they do not fit into when it comes to assessment. My next barrier would be lack of interest on the learners behalf. They have this idea that educators are the ones who need to put the information into their heads but that there is no effort required from their side.”*

Participant H: *“Home language proficiency. Little/no access to resources. Inability to communicate properly.”*

Participant I: *“Time constraints, parental support, learner dedication, they don't want to take responsibility for their own work and learning to get better.”*

Participant K: *“A learner not willing to get the help they need. A learner taking longer to understand. A learner losing interest. A learner always not doing what is expected of them.”*

4.3.2.2 Time constraints

Another factor experienced by participants included time constraints. Direct and indirect influences made it clear that time was a factor that the participants grappled with daily. The responses from the questionnaire are given below.

- Participant A: *“Time to engage with all learners at the level they required. Lack the skills to adequately assist severe barriers like dyslexia. Subject is content driven with no time to address issues outside of the curriculum.”*
- Participant C: *‘Lack of time and necessary resources’*
- Participant D: *“Large numbers of learners being taught, lack of valuable quality time and learners not interested to be helped. E.g. they do not arrive for an asp [Academic support Period] probably because they are feeling overwhelmed because they are struggling with more than one of their subjects.”*
- Participant E: *“For me the school curriculum does not allow much time for practical work, so I cannot see how my learners deal with real life scenarios and how they would apply theory learnt in class to the real world. side as the student.”*
- Participant F: *“1) Parents not aiding educators in their quest to aid their child. 2) Learners that are so engaged intervention amounts to a futile exercise. 3) sporting events that interfere/ rob time for additional academic support. 4) Learners who have to write tests and examinations in a language that is not their home language.”*
- Participant J: *“Time constraints, number of learners in class, parental involvement and resources to deal with learning barriers.”*
- Participant K: *“A learner not willing to get the help they need. A learner taking longer to understand. A learner losing interest. A learner always not doing what is expected of them.”*
- Participant L: *“Large classes where such learners fall through the cracks. Time, as the curriculum is fast paced in the limited contact time during class where discipline trumps learning. A lack of parent support is also a big barrier as they often can’t allow learners to stay for extra assistance due to transport issues.”*

Most participants noted that time constraints were a clear element that created a barrier to offering learner support. According to the hypothesis of Al-Bursaidi *et al.* (2021), due to time restrictions – as mentioned by most participants – educators find it challenging to provide adequate student support.

4.3.2.2 Parental involvement

The following participant responses highlighted that parental involvement remained an issue in the attempt to provide learner support:

- Participant B: *“Parents are also not always interested or willing to help at home.”*
- Participant F: *“1) Parents not aiding educators in their quest to aid their child.”*
- Participant I: *“Parental support.”*
- Participant J: *“Parental involvement”*

Participant L: *“A lack of parent support is also a big barrier as they often can’t allow learners to stay for extra assistance due to transport issues.”*

These participants indicated that parental participation was another mitigating aspect that made it difficult to create conducive learner support. The significance and requirement of parental participation were also mentioned by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2020) to guarantee that learners receive the assistance and direction they require to succeed.

4.3.2.3 Class sizes

Class sizes with South African mainstream schools remain an issue, the participants of this study referred to this issue often in their responses.

Participant D: *“Large numbers of learners being taught”*

Participant J: *“Number of learners in class”*

Participant L: *“Large classes where such learners fall through the cracks.”*

Kriel and Livingstone (2019) and Matsepe *et al.* (2019) draw attention to the problem of large class sizes that South African mainstream classrooms face. As noted by the participants, when class sizes surpass forty learners, it becomes difficult to recognise and support all the learners, which leads to learners – in the words of participant L – “falling through the cracks”.

4.3.2.4 Resources

South African schools remain under-resourced. Participants highlight that the need for learner support was hindered by the lack of resources.

Participant C: *“Lack of time and necessary resources.”*

Participant H: *“Little/no access to resources.”*

Participant J: *“resources to deal with learning barriers.”*

Resources, as stipulated by the participants are vital to implementing learner support. Owen-Smith (2010) and Fawole and Pillay (2019) echo the importance of resources for educators. Participant A, C, H and J pointed out the dire need for resources.

4.3.2.5 Standardised testing

Many of the participants strongly believed that the learners they taught were disadvantaged due to standardised testing, as do Kriel and Livingstone (2019). Many participants refer to this issue in their responses.

Participant E: *“We as educators are trying to coach learners into taking assessments in a certain way because that is the requirement, so not only are we trying to get the student to understand content, we are trying to force them into a mould that they do not fit into when it comes to assessment.”*

4.3.3 Theme 3: The importance of LoLT

Language barriers are a problem in South Africa, as noted by Navsaria et al. (2011). Language difficulties that learners in their classrooms face put educators in a difficult situation if they are unable to support the learners.

4.3.3.1 Language is vital to understanding content.

The participants of this study highlighted that proficiency in the language of instruction is of utmost importance as can be seen in the responses below.

Participant A: *“Very important. Terminology used is subject specific and requires additional knowledge. While they do not need to answer a comprehension, they need to be able to define and apply terms to a specific industry. Without understanding the term and language this is impossible. Business Studies also requires report writing that is applied knowledge, impossible without an understanding of the language.”*

Participant B: *“Very important as it's a theory-based subject.”*

Participant C: *“It is very important as it is the medium of instruction for learning, if the medium of instruction is not understood then it makes learning a difficult task. However, in saying that this would not necessarily apply to practical subjects.”*

Participant D: *“I feel being proficient in a language is important in any subject. What I have picked up is that those learners who are not proficient misinterpret questions and often fail tests not because they don't know the answer but because of a language barrier (They misinterpret what is being asked). Also, when teaching a learner who struggles with the language, they might misinterpret what is being said or cannot keep up with taking*

notes so it will affect their overall performance at school. They start falling behind and become disheartened and have feelings of hopelessness.”

Participant E: *“It is extremely important to be able to understand English in Business Studies. As a business studies educator I am constantly introducing and referring to new terminology that is very business studies specific. If a student cannot understand my explanation of the term because they cannot understand the words I am using, they will not be able to answer a question on this term in an assessment. We do not mark spelling in Business studies, but many times especially with the grade 9 learners, the words they write are so badly spelled, I cannot mark them correct. In the classroom, there are constant discussions happening every day. Learners bring their ideas and their stories of the business world to share with the class. If a learner cannot understand English, they are not able to benefit from these discussions”.*

Participant F: *“I feel it is of utmost importance as examinations, for example at our school, is in English thus favouring English home language learners. It interprets to often other learners having the skills, heuristics and algorithms required to succeed in my subject but are not sure of what exactly is being asked as they do not possess the same level of language skills as their English speaking peers”*

Participant G: *“Extremely important. Mathematics is in itself a language. Proficiency in English as the main proponent of learning and teaching Mathematics is of vital importance; failure to have a basic comprehension of an instruction, statement or question heavily influences the way in which a learner begins to answer a question, both formally and informally (for assessment). I have to encourage learners to speak the “correct” Mathematics because combining words or phrases in the wrong order can negatively influence the way in which an explanation is perceived by me as the teacher. Words for certain concepts belong and don't belong in Mathematics so having a core understanding of English is vital in one's performance, or lack thereof in Mathematics.”*

Participant H: *“Very important.”*

Participant I: *“Extremely, learners who do not understand the language of instruction are unable to reach their full potential in the subjects and are unable to communicate effectively using terms and definitions in order to explain their answers. Learners don't understand the language used in questions and are therefore unable to full answer questions that show an in depth understanding of concepts.”*

Participant J: *“Very important as it is the basis of all subjects and understanding all concepts.”*

Participant K: *“It is very important so that a learner can know what the subject is all about. This helps a learner to understand everything that will be taught in that subject and it makes the subject to be much more easier.”*

Participant L: *“Proficiency in LoLT is of vital importance as those learners who are highly proficient have a better advantage than those learners that lack proficiency.”*

The findings of the studies done by Prinsloo *et al.* (2018), Sirisrimangkorn (2018), and Poonpon (2018) regarding language competency and its significance for content comprehension have been echoed by the participants. Cummins (2008) and most participants emphasise the critical role of language acquisition.

4.3.3.2 Learners who are not proficient are disadvantaged and underperform

Participants explained that inhibited proficiency in the LoLT resulted in learners being disadvantaged and underperforming. Below are the responses from the participants.

Participant F: *“I feel it is of utmost importance as examinations, for example at our school, is in English thus favouring English home language learners. It interprets to often other learners having the skills, heuristics and algorithms required to succeed in my subject but are not sure of what exactly is being asked as they do not possess the same level of language skills as their English-speaking peers.”*

Participant G: *“Words for certain concepts belong and don't belong in Mathematics so having a core understanding of English is vital in one's performance, or lack thereof in Mathematics.”*

Participant I: *“Learners don't understand the language used in questions and are therefore unable to full answer questions that show an in depth understanding of concepts.”*

Participant L: *“Proficiency in LoLT is of vital importance as those student who are highly proficient have a better advantage than those learners that lack proficiency.”*

Like the participants above, Owen-Smith (2012) hypothesises that learners' poor performance has a cascading effect on their self-esteem. Participant D particularly referred to the adverse emotional effects of language acquisition. The other participants referred mainly to how the LoLT was critical to understanding the content.

4.3.4 Theme 4: What influences Grade 9 subject choices

In alignment with the aim of the research, it was important to determine what influenced subject choices as the study focused on Grade 9 learners. One of the aims was to determine whether language proficiency in a subject influenced the subjects being chosen for the FET band. The reason for this is that when learners

make their subject choices towards the end of Grade 9, educators could ensure they were making the correct decisions based on their ability and preferences and not purely on their negative experiences in a subject due to their limited English language proficiency. Participants provided similar insights.

4.3.4.1 Parents

Parents play an influential role in a learner's life. When it comes to subject choice, participants highlighted that the parents played a large part in this process. As mentioned earlier and supported by Geldenhuys and Wevers (2020), parents play a vital role in the education of any learner.

Participant A: *"Parental pressure, career ambitions (not always realistic), ability in the subject, enjoyment of the subject. "*

Participant B: *"Subjects they enjoy as well as what they find easy and interesting. Some parents force their kids to take specific subjects when it's a subject the kid doesn't enjoy and they find it difficult."*

Participant E: *"I think parents are the number one factors when it comes to choosing subjects. Parents are more interested in their children being able to get into medical fields and high paying careers rather than the interests of their children. I think that both parents and learners do not see the value of certain subjects in a child's life. You find many subject changes in grade 10 and 11, because the grade 9's chose what they were told to choose and end up not enjoying it. I also think that content and curriculum can affect a child's decision. A subject like business, I have heard grade 9's say is a lot of work and that is why they would not choose it. I think learners pick their subjects based on which ones may be easiest to do and do not require a lot of work."*

Participant F: *"Positive influences would include, enjoyment of subject, the ability to do well in a subject, the need for the subject to continue with desired further studies after school. Negative factors, parents insisting on a certain subject to be taken, taking a subject for its perceived easy nature, needing the subject for further studies."*

Participant G: *"Parents/Guardians are the single biggest negative influence on a Grade 9s subject choices. Year after year you silently see how the home scenario has brainwashed the child to "believe" that a choice of certain subjects either opens or closes "doors" for the learner - and these "opinions" are so baseless, have no actual substance to back-up and no research has actually been done and you see that the parent/guardian wants the learner to do and accomplish that which they never accomplished when they were in school. Positively I believe that society offers children a much broader role in career opportunities and so many different combinations of subject choices*

that children can choose for themselves positively impacts their choices because they feel in-control of their academic future because after all they are the ones who need to sit in the FET phase for three years and actually acquire the knowledge that adequately prepares them for their final Matric examination.”

Participant H: *“Positive: Subject stimulation, access to information, understanding of the subject content, the ability to link the subject to a specific career. Negative: limited information regarding the subject or a career path. Parents forcing learners to take subjects that are not in their capabilities, social ideas regarding a subject.”*

Participant I: *“Parents, Peers, Careers path, Like or dislike of subject educators, understanding of subject content and ability to do well in it.”*

Participant J: *“Future career wishes, pressure from parents, social media and friends.”*

Participant L: *“Grandiose future expectations, peer/family pressure, curiosity and passion for certain subjects, previous knowledge and mark restrictions that limit options for choices. Definitely proficiency abilities.”*

4.3.4.2 Parents

Another influential factor that was mentioned by a few of the participants is the influence from peers. The response given below is one of many already mentioned responses.

Participant K: *Their level of performance (strong/weak). Passion, career choices and peer pressure (friends influencing them).*

4.3.4.3 Performance and ability in the subject

Participants indicated that a learner’s performance and ability in a subject also played a vital role in the subject selection process. Their responses are given below.

Participant C: *Positive – based on their field of study, a subject previously understood and enjoyed. Negative – the need to choose the subject based on a specific career path, subjects with content that seems easier to cope with and manage.*

4.3.4.5 Enjoyment

Enjoyment of the subject was a common factor mentioned by participants as seen below.

Participant A: *“Enjoyment of the subject.”*

Participant B: *“Subjects they enjoy as well as what they find easy and interesting.”*

Participant C: *“Positive – based on their field of study, a subject previously understood and enjoyed.”*

Participant F: *“Positive influences would include, enjoyment of subject, the ability to do well in a subject, the need for the subject to continue with desired further studies after school.”*

Participant L: *“curiosity and passion for certain subjects”*

4.3.4.6 Career choices

Lastly, the daunting task of career choices as an influence on subject choices was mentioned often by the participants.

Participant F: *“ needing the subject for further studies.”*

Participant H: *“Positive: the ability to link the subject to a specific career.”*

Participant I: *“Careers path”*

Participant J: *Future career wishes, pressure from parents, social media and friends.*

Participant K: *Their level of performance (strong/weak). Passion, career choices and peer pressure (friends influencing them).*

Participant L: *“Grandiose future expectations.”*

4.3.5 Theme 5: The benefits of PBL

Essien (2018) proved that PBL improved English language skills and resulted in a positive learning attitude amongst learners. The aim of this study was to investigate whether PBL could be used a support tool for learners who experienced a prohibited English proficiency. Most of the study’s participants were on board with this hypothesis.

4.3.5.1 Marks improve

The participants were of the opinion that PBL gave learners an opportunity to improve their marks.

Participant A: *“They have time to work through concepts they don't understand. They can seek help when necessary, not possible in a test or formal assessment. They can do their own research in their home language to enhance their understanding of the task. They bring a holistic element to the subject, learners can see how topics interrelate and don't exist in a vacuum. Learners also learn on their own, research tasks and enhance their knowledge. Projects allow learners who don't excel at tests to also achieve and enjoy the learning environment.”*

Participant B: *“They can ask for help from someone that is proficient in the language. They can get help from peers as well as the teacher when they don't understand something. I enjoy*

it because learners complete it at home so it doesn't take away teaching time. It also improves their marks."

Participant I: *"Learners would be able to explore and investigate in their own language outside of the classroom to aid them in better understanding concepts. It is a good opportunity for learners to better their marks and show their creativity".*

Participant J: *"It allows them to show that they have other abilities. My thoughts about PBL are positive. It allows learner to learn different skills and knowledge. Allows learners to think out of the box and become creative. Helps learners to be exposed to some of the things they didn't know. Gives learners enough time to complete tasks. Learners always do well in such learning. Learners get a chance to use different types of skills to solve certain problems."*

Participant K: *"It could benefit learners in a sense that they will be learning a lot of new things while they also do great on their grades."*

Participant L: *"They would be able to make associations more quickly and integrate learning more effectively which would increase self-confidence and encourage internal motivation. I am very much for the use of this approach in school settings. I have experienced this form of learning personally and feel that I learnt more and understand the content better than it being instructed to me from a teacher orientated approach. This approach however requires planning and effective facilitation while managing discipline and being under resources in a school where learners prefer teacher-orientated learning instead of learner-centred learning requires them to take responsibility for their own learning, through the facilitation of an educator."*

As Martinez (2019) indicated, PBL helps learners improve their results. Participants B, I, J and K particularly referred to these advantages of PBL. Krajcik and Blumenfield (2006), Mafuudloh and Fitriati (2020) mention that PBL allows for learners to improve their speaking abilities which was also highlighted by the responses of Participants B, J, and L.

4.3.5.2 Independence

Participants highlighted that PBL gave learners a sense of independence and autonomy during PBL implementation as seen in their responses below.

Participant D: *"It could benefit these learners as it forces them to read the language that is not their first language, more, through researching. It will improve spelling as they are seeing the words more and can do spell checks. It will also help them with understanding as*

they can work at their own pace. I am for project-based learning because one learns more and is more focused when finding the answers, yourself. A learners can develop skills like how to research properly, problem-solving, critical thinking etc as well as developing social skills by working in a group. It also encourages teamwork and responsibilities.”

Participant G: *“I think it would enhance the LoLT proficiency because the PBL would get the learners actively engaged and the more they are dealing with everyday task and applying the theoretical concepts they will start to be able talk "better" because of the nature of what PBL is. The learner would most likely begin to see the gaps in their language acquisition and the PBL would help to overcome this. I’m happy to implement PBL. It allows for an integrated and an adaptive thought process.”*

Participant H: *“It is set at a pace which can support their learning. Provides mini plenary tasks which don’t overwhelm the learners. It can show them the integration and connection between subjects. Project based learning is valuable for learners as it allows learners to discover and grow for themselves, they are not limited to what is said in the classroom and are able to use any resources available to them in a personal capacity as well as at school.”*

PBL allows for autonomy as mentioned by participant A, H and I. This resonates with the views of Friedman (2020) as well as the views on responsibility by Baghoussi and El Ouchdi (2019). Creswell (2014) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015) highlight that PBL allows learners to learn through experiences which is also supported by the Bronfenbrenner theory and mentioned by Participants A, D and G.

4.3.5.3 Problem solving

Participants were also of the opinion that PBL encouraged learners to become problem solvers, as seen in the responses below.

Participant C: *“It promotes active learning and allows for more interaction, critical thinking and a more practical approach to solving problems. It is essential in certain learning areas as it enables learners to acquire deeper knowledge on a subject or content. It also allows for learners to work together and explore different thoughts and ideas based on a common topic.”*

Participant E: *“I do think it could benefit the learners that have a prohibited proficiency if there is support from the parent. I do believe that support from the teacher is imperative but some learners are not comfortable asking educators for help or honestly do not have*

the time due to procrastination of the project and how late they have left it. If the parent is able to guide the student in the completion of the project, then it would be beneficial. If not, then the learner is stuck at home with no support and will not be able to do the project to the required standard. It may discourage their efforts if they are feeling inadequate about their capabilities. For me I have really seen how even learners who struggle have come to enjoy the subject. This interprets into me not having to fight a negative attitude as well as gaps in baseline knowledge. Sometimes putting in a game or two to make the content fun also helps but all aspects of the lessons are designed for the learner to ultimately use the knowledge gained to solve the problem. I have also found that learners now see mathematics as less of an abstract subject and more as a subject that supplies "tools" solve real world problems."

Participant F: *"I am not sure if problem solving situations can aid learners in LoLT and am a big advocate for home language teaching. However, with 11 official languages in our country that makes this a daunting task to accomplish. I think they could possibly benefit from seeing how the content of my subject aids finding solutions. I believe that it has tremendous and long-term positive benefits especially within the field of Mathematics. The correlation between the two would actually allow learners to thrive and know that they have actually acquired knowledge, not just for the sake of being able to answer questions in an exam but stepping into the real world and actually having a concrete understanding of the how and why of things around them."*

4.3.5.4 Can request assistance during completion

Another factor that was highlighted was that learners can ask for assistance during PBL as opposed to when they are completing a formal assessment when they are not able to ask for assistance which, in turn, negatively affects their results. The responses are indicated below.

Participant B: *"They can ask for help from someone that is proficient in the language."*

The above data from participants in the study highlight critical implications regarding the use of PBL as an instructional approach. Participant B emphasised the benefits of PBL, such as learners' ability to seek assistance from proficient individuals, including educators and peers, leading to improved performance and enjoyment, which is evident in the research by El-Henawy and Ali (2015). Participant E, however, raised concerns about learners' access to support, particularly when they lacked assistance from a teacher or parent, potentially leading to feelings of inadequacy and discouragement. Participant L supported PBL for

its potential to enhance self-confidence and motivation but underscored the need for effective facilitation and discipline management in a school setting that may be more accustomed to teacher-oriented learning.

These comments underscore the importance of ensuring equitable access to support in PBL and the need for careful planning and facilitation to make this approach successful in various educational contexts. The researcher believes that PBL is beneficial and allows learners a platform to discover their own learning style without the pressure of language acquisition. There are several constraints, however, such as time and resources, that need to be addressed before PBL can be successful as a learner support tool.

4.4 Summary

This chapter focused on the analysis and interpretation of the research findings, having conducted individual interviews with educators (See Annexure F), observations during interviews, questionnaires, and field notes based on all data gathering proceedings at the selected schools in Johannesburg South concerning PBL as a support tool for learners with inhibited proficiency in English. Chapter Five provides detailed information regarding the findings, recommendations, and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the research findings of the data analysed in Chapter 4, and further provides the recommendations and the conclusion of the research study. This study aimed to investigate whether PBL could be used as a support tool for educators teaching learners with inhibited English proficiency. The study was guided by the research objectives, which were to determine:

- 1 How the academic performance of Grade 9 learners who are not first language learners of the medium of instruction is affected.
- 2 How learner support is implemented by educators of Grade 9 learners who experience inhibited English proficiency.
- 3 Whether PBL can be used by educators as an effective learning support tool for Grade 9 learners experiencing inhibited English proficiency.

Through the research aims and objectives, relevant literature has been consulted to establish the background and the nature of support to learners with inhibited English proficiency globally and in South Africa. The literature revealed the challenges mainstream schools face regarding language policy implementation, how the events of the past in South Africa influence education, and the strategies that could be adopted to offer support to learners in mainstream schools. The contents of this chapter serve to highlight and summarise the major findings of the current research, together with most significant aspects from the literature review. This chapter will further focus on the recommendations and the limitations of the research.

5.2 Review of the research problem

The demands of academic achievement are heavily influenced by a learner's skill in the medium of teaching. Closing the gap between academic achievement and language proficiency is needed. Although language policies have been established and well-articulated to fully support these learners, such policies do not cater for the diversity of learners and their needs. It is often overlooked that learning takes place through a second or third language and the worrying factor is how to assist these learners.

5.3 Summary of major findings

5.3.1 Research aim

The intent of this study was to explore the effectiveness of PBL as a support tool for educators who teach learners with a limited proficiency in English. The following is a discussion of the findings through the data gathered.

5.3.1.1 Common signs that a learner requires support due to a language proficiency

The data revealed a variety of ways in which educators could identify when a learner required support due to language proficiency. The signs identified were:

- The need for content to be retaught after it had been taught;
- A learner's body language in class and during lessons;
- Learners achieved low marks and poor assessment results;
- Learners who struggled with language proficiency were often disengaged and there was an evident lack of participation during lessons; and
- Work ethic was non-existent, and work was regularly incomplete.

Most participants mentioned that content needed to be retaught. It was interesting to observe how many educators mentioned this point, revealing a reactive approach to teaching learners with support needs. From the views expressed, learners required support when they exhibited the signs listed above. The common signs mentioned by the participants corroborated those identified by Prinsloo *et al.* (2018) on performing poorly and the impact that language had on academic achievement, and Kriel and Livingstone (2019) on support required for academic progress.

5.3.1.2 Barriers experienced by educators when supporting learners

Participants mentioned that they experienced difficulties when trying to provide support to learners. Some of the insights shared by the participants include:

- Learners are uninterested and not bothered;
- There are several time constraints;
- There is a lack of parent involvement;
- The class sizes limit them;
- There are very few resources available; and
- Standardised testing limits their support.

Many educators are left to find ways to support learners on their own. There is no established system or method in schools. Most of these responses are echoed by Kriel and Livingstone (2019) on class sizes and standardised testing, Yoro *et al.* (2020) on types of learner support, Geldenhuys and Wevers (2020) on parent involvement, and Kotzé *et al.* (2017) on the importance of support across all systems.

5.3.1.3 The importance of LoLT proficiency

Participants who taught in English medium schools shared the following based on the importance of LoLT proficiency:

- Language proficiency in the LoLT is vital in understanding content; and
- Learners who were not proficient in the LoLT were disadvantaged and usually underperformed.

Many of the participants revealed that they worked with diverse classes made up of learners who were and those who were not proficient in the LoLT. As discussed earlier in this research, Prinsloo *et al.* (2018) emphasised the importance of proficiency in the LoLT to grasp content knowledge. Narvarisia *et al.* (2011) also highlighted the grave importance of proficiency in the LoLT. Posel and Zeller (2011) mentioned that many learners underperform because of a poor proficiency in the LoLT.

5.3.1.4 Benefits of PBL

Participants were educators who had used PBL in the classroom and provided insight on their experience during and after using PBL:

- Learners' marks improve;
- PBL creates independence and allows learners to be creative in their home language;
- Teaches learners problem solving; and
- Learners can request assistance during PBL.

Participants revealed that while they used PBL in their classes, they had not intended to use it as a specific tool for support, nonetheless, they shared the experiences listed above. Essien (2018) and Syarifah and Emiliasari (2019) postulated that since PBL is not aligned to the curriculum, it supports the creativity of learners.

5.3.2 Objective 1: Explore how the academic performance of Grade 9 learners who are not first language learners of the medium of instruction is affected.

The district-based support teams, which were established to strengthen the education support services by building capacity in schools, train educators how to recognise and address learners' learning needs, from

severe to mild. These teams are the primary source of assistance for educators concerning the support of the educational needs of learners in mainstream schools (Department of Education, 2001).

From the analysis and interpretation of the research data, it was established that the academic performance of learners was negatively affected if they were not proficient in the LoLT. According to the DBE (2010) learners are usually taught in their home language in Grades 1 to 3 and make the switch to the medium of English from Grade 4. It has been proven that learner performance remains low due to poor language proficiency (Prinsloo *et al.*, 2018). Thus, it is vital that the issue of the LoLT be addressed in South Africa's education system.

It is crucial to recognise the challenges educators face when trying to educate learners with limited language skills. Although there are many policies in place and more in the process of development, not all learners are supported and accommodated by these policies. Additionally, these policies are not put into practice.

It is challenging for educators to support learners because of a lack of resources, time restrictions, and classes with large numbers of learners. According to the comments of educator comments, added to the constraints of time and lack of resources, a lack of parental involvement frequently prevents them from being able to help and support learners.

According to the Department of Education (2001), learner support should be provided to allow learners to perform at their best. The findings of this research and the directives of the Department of Education (2001) do not correlate.

5.3.3 Objective 2: To determine whether PBL can be used by educators as an effective learning support tool for Grade 9 learners experiencing limited English proficiency.

Support for learners with inhibited language proficiency may be enhanced using PBL, according to the responses of educators.

The performance of the learners clearly increased because of PBL. Additionally, learners became more independent, which was one of the key goals of PBL. PBL also gave learners the opportunity to express themselves creatively in their mother tongue, which helped with their motivation and interest because they wanted to participate in the learning process and comprehend what they were learning. This contrasted to their previous experiences when they exhibited no interest or concern because of their lack of understanding. Problem-solving techniques were also introduced to the learners through the use of PBL.

Educators could help, despite limitations of time and resources, because the project was not standardised. When learners take standardised tests, no help may be provided by the educator.

5.3.4 Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework

The study showed that collaboration between all the stakeholders at the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem levels was lacking. The study also demonstrated a complete lack of parental care and support.

Educators would not be able to support learners with learner needs in mainstream schools without the involvement and consent of the parents. Educators also need the proper training, supervision, and provision of resources.

To give learners, the best possible support, the whole ecological framework developed by Bronfenbrenner needs to be adhered to. It would be beneficial for students to be able to receive assistance from PBL implementation via each of the five model components, rather than simply the microsystem.

5.4 Recommendations

With the intention of adopting PBL as a support tool for learners who are not proficient in the LoLT, the following recommendations are made based on this study:

1. Lessons should not need to be taught again. Learners who struggle with the LoLT should be identified earlier and be accommodated. These learners need to be prioritised before the content is taught. A proactive approach needs to be used in place of the current reactive approach to learner support. Educators are advised to incorporate the PBL technique into their teaching-learning processes, as it has been shown to enhance learners' academic achievement.
2. Educators need to complete practical training in which pertinent special education pedagogies and techniques are presented, illustrated, and implemented in accordance with the educational demands encountered.
3. Given that the PBL technique has been shown to be helpful in raising learners' academic achievement, educators are strongly encouraged to incorporate it into their teaching particularly for those learners who display an inhibited English proficiency.
4. A support team that can aid educators who lack the skills or resources to help learners in need should be available in every school.
5. Parents need to be informed about issues relating to inclusive education and various learning requirements of learners. Through the scheduling of meetings with parents, they should be encouraged to become active partners in supporting their children
6. Policy principles should be appropriately translated into actions for implementation, paying adequate attention to the pragmatic ways of putting theory into practice.

7. Given the positive track record of PBL implementation in classrooms across the globe, it is highly advised that educators receive PBL mentoring and training. This will assist instructors in understanding the benefits of the technique and gaining confidence in it.

5.5 Summary

According to this study, PBL can help students whose language proficiency is hindering them in the LoLT. Even though PBL was used in the classroom by educators as a teaching method rather than a support tool, the results and findings it generated were generally positive..

PBL as a support tool has not been sufficiently established, thus more research would be helpful in this regard. It has been found that educators are on their own, with little support from the community or parents. Despite the well-written government policy documents guiding the implementation process of inclusive education techniques, there haven't been many initiatives by relevant bodies to make learner assistance in classrooms a reality.

As a result, the different learning requirements of learners continue to go unmet, with educators left unskilled and unable to handle the challenging requirements of doing so. Active teacher preparation and training stand out as the essential issues that need to be addressed among the numerous other tactics that might be used in mainstream classrooms.

5.6 Conclusion

It is clear from the study's findings that educators support the PBL concept. This research demonstrates, however, that educators lack confidence in using PBL as a support strategy specifically for learners who require assistance with their language skills. Due to the poor language abilities that learners exhibit, educators are overwhelmed and forced to work alone or to continually reteach content with no workable outcome. Lack of training, preparation, and equipment to deal with such challenges is a serious concern. The results demonstrate that this significantly reduces learners' chances of delivering their finest work. Due to a lack of support, the total situation eventually puts learners at a disadvantage. The expectation of educators to ensure learners can achieve at their best will remain if accountable structures and stakeholders do not engage in cooperatively resolving the current issues in language proficiency with practical and realistic solutions.

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ANNEXURE A: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	05 September 2022
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2022– 30 September 2022 2022/422
Name of Researcher:	Ceronio, C
Address of Researcher:	83 Lombard Street Albertane Ext 1 Alberton
Telephone Number:	072 261 5514
Email address:	Candice.h1curro.co.za Candicehyde4gmail.com
Research Topic:	Exploring project –based learning as an effective learning support tool for educator teaching learners with an inhibited English proficiency.
Type of qualification	Masters in Education : Learner Support
Number and type of schools:	X(five-5)
District/s/HO	Johannesburg South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

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

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

1

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

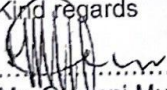
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. The letter would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools, 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.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.**
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 has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs, and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers, and learners involved. Persons who offer their cooperation 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 program 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 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 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: 06/09/2022

2

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Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

ANNEXURE B: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

NWU Research Study

Study Title: Exploring project-based learning as an effective support tool for educators teaching Grade 9 learners with an inhibited English proficiency.

You are invited to participate in the above-mentioned academic study conducted by Mrs Candice Ceronio (Masters candidate), student number 36099910- North-West University.

Contact Number: 072 261 5514

Contact email: candicehyde4@gmail.com / candice.h1@curro.co.za

The purpose of this study is to fulfil the requirements for a Masters degree and to gain insight into the title mentioned above. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of project-based learning as a support tool for educators who teach learners who experience limited proficiency in English. The focus is on the performance of learners in non-language subjects and not specifically on the performance of learners in language subjects. Moreover, the study aims to explore how the academic performance of Grade 9 learners who are not first language learners of the medium of instruction is affected. Herewith, the researcher aims to determine whether project-based learning can be used by educators as an effective learning support tool for Grade 9 learners experiencing limited English proficiency.

Participation is voluntary:

Your participation in this study is appreciated. You may choose not to participate and retract from participating at any time without any repercussions. All responses are kept confidential. No one is identified in person in the study or based on the answers provided. The confidentiality of the information received is guaranteed. Participants as well as the schools name remains anonymous and pseudonyms will be used where necessary.

Supervisor details:

Should you require any further information pertaining to this study, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor/s:

Dr Noorullah Shaikhmag: Noorullah.Shaikhmag@nwu.ac.za

Dr Shantha Naidoo: Shantha.Naidoo@nwu.ac.za

By answering these questions, you agree to partake in this research study. You have voluntarily consented to participate in this study.

Section A

Demographics of participants:

1. Age of participant
2. Gender of participant
3. Number of teaching years
4. Which subject/s do you teach?

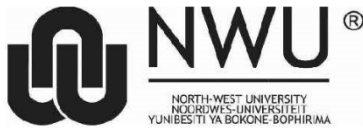
Section B

Questionnaire:

The following questions are open-ended questions. Please strive to answer each question as comprehensively as possible.

1. What is your understanding of the term learner support?
2. What are the different signs that you have seen during your teaching experience that indicate that a learner requires support?
3. As an educator, what barriers do you experience when it comes to learner support?
4. How would you define language proficiency?
5. In your opinion, how important is proficiency in the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in your subject?
6. What do you think influences a Grade 9 learner's subject choices? Identify both positive and negative aspects.
7. What is your understanding of project-based learning (PBL)?
8. When and how have you implemented project-based learning in your classroom?
9. What are your thoughts and feelings towards to project-based learning?
10. How do you think PBL could benefit learners with a prohibited LoLT proficiency?
11. Any additional information you have with regards to using PBL as a support tool?

ANNEXURE C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



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: 016 103 4440
Email: Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EduREC)** on 23 February 2023, the Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your request for extension 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: Exploring project-based learning for learner support in Grade 9																
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr N Shaikhnag																
Student / Team: C Ceronio (MEd student – 36099910), Dr S Naidoo																
Ethics number:	N	W	U	-	0	1	9	1	6	-	2	0	-	A	2	
	Institution				Study Number					Year			Status			
	<u>Status:</u> S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation															
Application Type:	Single study															
Commencement date:	23/02/2023							Risk:	Low Risk							
Expiry date:	23/02/2024															
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):

<p>General conditions:</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the ES-REC:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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 ES-REC, 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 ES-REC reserves the right to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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 ES-REC 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.*

The ES-REC 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 ES-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof CP van der Vyver
Chairperson NWU Education Sciences 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

ANNEXURE D: PLAGIRISM REPORT

C_Ceronio_Exploring_Project_Based_Learning_TURNITIN
REPORT_21.11.2023_CLEAN.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

7 %	6 %	1 %	2 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	dspace.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	2 %
2	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	1 %
3	repository.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
4	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
5	"South African Schooling: The Enigma of Inequality", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2019 Publication	<1 %
6	core.ac.uk Internet Source	<1 %
7	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1 %
8	vital.seals.ac.za:8080 Internet Source	<1 %

ANNEXURE E: LANGUAGE EDITING REPORT



P A Crain t/a Empressa

22 Harold Street, Sunnyrock, Germiston, 1401

+27 72 085 6058

tricia@empressa.co

2023-11-24

Ms C Ceronio

EXPLORING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING AS AN EFFECTIVE SUPPORT TOOL FOR EDUCATORS TEACHING LEARNERS WITH AN INHIBITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

This is to confirm that drafts of this document have been edited, corrected, and suggestions made for issues around language, grammar, and punctuation. The references and citations have been checked for compliance with adapted Harvard protocols.

Sincerely



Patricia Crain
BAdmin, NDPM

ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview schedule for participants in Research conducted by C. Ceronio

Title: Exploring project-based learning as an effective support tool for educators teaching Grade 9 learners with an inhibited English proficiency

Twelve (12) participants (anonymous)

Four (4) schools (Johannesburg South District)

Date	School	Time
12 September 2022	School A	14:30-17:30
20 September 2022	School B	14:30-17:30
22 September 2022	School C	14:30-17:30
29 September 2022	School D	14:30-17:30