

Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School-Based Support Teams

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DECLARATION

I, Sonja Bezuidenhout, declare that “Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School-Based Support Teams” is my own work and that all the references that were used or quoted were indicated and recognised.

_____ S.Bezuidenhout _____

Signature

_____ 22 / 11 / 2022 _____

Date

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school, according to the Salamanca statement (Unesco, 1994), is that all children should learn together, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. In South Africa, inclusive education has been initiated as part of the democratisation and transformation of the education system. As part of this transformation, all schools should provide a continuum of support and services that corresponds to the spectrum of learning barriers in the specific school context. School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) have a significant impact on the successful establishment of inclusive schools. This study investigated how (SBSTs) function and how their functioning can be optimized to facilitate support for learners with special needs. A social constructivist paradigm informed the basic qualitative research design applied in this study. The participants included purposively selected teachers who and the learning support coordinator of the circuit, in which the research was conducted. The teachers were purposively selected, based on their experience in the specific context. Data was collected using a semi-structured qualitative questionnaire in Phase 1 and semi-structured on-line, individual interviews in Phase 2. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data. The findings indicate that, the SBSTs functioning in these contexts can be optimised through the development of a collaborative process that 1) involve teachers throughout the process, 2) actively engage with parents identify and 3) involve professionals and consultants from the community. SBSTs should also provide guidance for teachers to implement knowledge and skills obtained through training to ensure that learners with special needs are identified early and that teachers can provide early interventions for learners with special needs in collaboration with the support networks in the community.

Key terms

School-Based Support Team (SBST); Special needs; Policy on screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS) process;

OPSOMMING

Die fundamentele beginsel van die inklusiewe skool, volgens die Salamanca dokument (Unesco, 1994), is dat alle kinders saam moet leer, waar moontlik, ongeag enige probleme of verskille wat hulle mag hê. In Suid-Afrika is inklusiewe onderwys geïnisieer as deel van die demokratisering en transformasie van die onderwysstelsel. As deel van hierdie transformasie behoort alle skole as 'n kontinuum van ondersteuning en dienste behoort te verskaf. Dit moet ooreenstem met die kontinuum van leerhindernisse wat elke leerder teëkom. Onderwysers het 'n beduidende impak op die suksesvolle vestiging van inklusiewe skole. Hierdie navorsing ondersoek die wyse waarop die funksionering van skoolgebaseerde ondersteuningspanne (SGOS) geoptimaliseer kan word om sodoende leerders met spesiale behoeftes te ondersteun. Die sosiaal konstruktivistiese paradigma het as basis gedien vir die ontwerp van die kwalitatiewe studie. Die studie het die volgende deelnemers ingesluit: onderwysers wat op die SGOS span dien; onderwysers wat nie dien op die SGOS van skole nie en die koördineerder: leerondersteuning in die kring waarin die navorsing plaas gevind het. Die deelnemers is doelgerig geselekteer op grond van hulle ervaring binne die spesifieke konteks. Data is ingesamel deur middel van semi-gestruktureerde kwalitatiewe vraeslyste in Fase 1 en semi-gestruktureerde aanlyn individuele onderhoude in Fase 2. Tematiese data analise is toegepas, om die data te analiseer. Die bevinding toon aan dat die funksionering van die SGSB's in die konteks geoptimaliseer kan word deur die ontwikkeling van 'n samewerkende proses wat 1) onderwysers deurlopend betrek 2) aktief met ouers in interaksie tree en 3) professionele persone en konsultante uit die gemeenskap betrek. Verder is dit duidelik dat die SGSB onderwysers moet begelei om, die kennis en vaardighede wat hulle verkry deur opleiding in praktyk te implimenteer en sodoende te verseker dat leerders met spesiale behoeftes vroeg geïdentifiseer en ondersteun word in samewerking met die ondersteuningsnetwerk wat die span opbou.

Sleuteltermes

Skool gebaseerde ondersteuningspanne (SGOS); spesiale behoeftes; Beleid oor sifting, identifikasie, assessering en ondersteuning (SIAS) prosesse

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CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUALISING THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Background and motivation
1.3 Problem statement
1.4 Research question
1.5 Purpose, aim and objectives of the study
1.6 Research paradigm, design and methodology
1.7 Rigor of the study
1.8 Ethical considerations
1.9 Key concepts
1.10 Structure of the study

Table 1: Overview of chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

All citizens, regardless of background, socioeconomic status, gender, religious affiliation, physical or mental ability, or age, should have access to support that enable them to achieve their full potential. The development of human potential is essential to safeguard and advance human rights in the context of creating an inclusive education and training system. Schools, as educational institutions can make a meaningful contribution to society by creating opportunities for all learners to develop their full potential (DoE, 2001) through the implementation of the relevant policies such as the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (Ferguson, 2008:109-110) and the Policy on screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS). As the primary figure in a mainstream education classroom, teachers should receive instruction on how to best support learners who are struggling to overcome obstacles to learning. Despite all the formal training teachers received on pre-service and in-service levels, learners with special needs still are often still perceived as a burden to teachers despite the expectation that they should be integrated into mainstream classrooms. This results

in negative attitudes that may impede the implementation of inclusive education (Caputo & Langher, 2014; Donohue & Bornman 2014). It is crucial to devise various strategies for assisting teachers in overcoming the challenges associated with the inclusion of these learners (Boyer & Gillespie, 2009). Considering the important role that School-Based Support Teams have in the implementation of inclusive education policies, this study will explore how the functioning of these teams can be optimised to enhance the facilitation of more efficient support for learners with special needs.

1.2 Background and motivation.

Upon taking office in 1996, the new government of South Africa merged the country's 17 separate educational agencies into a single Department of Education. Embracing this transformation, the Department of Education pledged to guarantee that all learners have equal educational opportunities, and are welcomed in all schools. Inclusion, according to Sapon-Shevin (2007), starts with the belief that every child, regardless of their socioeconomic status, deserves an equal opportunity to receive a quality education. To provide these equal opportunities regardless of their history, culture, skills or impairments, gender or ethnicity, all learners should be encouraged to reach their greatest potential (White Paper 6, 2001:8). Because of this commitment, an inclusive education system has been implemented to provide a basis for supporting learners with varying degrees of special needs and learning difficulties. According to Walton and Nel (2012), full inclusion proposes a policy of zero admission rejections, the elimination of special needs schools, and the elimination of self-contained or segregated classes. Therefore, all learners should be educated in the same classroom. If intervention is required, the classroom teacher should be prepared to provide assistance to the learners with special needs.

Various model for the effective implementation of inclusive education are implemented in schools across the globe. Two main categories of models exist, namely a full inclusion model and a continuum of services model is identified in the research. (Forlin, 2012; Dyson, 2001; Artiles & Dyson, 2005; Fletcher & Artiles, 2005; Florian, 2010; Mitchell, 2005; César & Ainscow, 2006; Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). In South Africa, a continuum of services model has been applied. The application of the model implies that all children are educated within a unified department of education (DoE, 2001) by providing support in accordance to the needs

of the child within the district in which the child resides. The continuum of services include, regular schools, alternative schools, and comprehensive high schools, Mainstream schools offer a range of options that is tailored to the specific requirements of their learners, as advocated by the concept of multilevel classroom education. To accommodate a large range of learners' needs, full-service schools offer an extensive range of academic programs. Learners with special needs have access to a comprehensive school (full-service) in their community (White Paper No. 6, 2001). Rather than focusing on learners' shortcomings, full-service schools emphasize problem solving and the development of their strengths. Mainstream schools can rely on assistance from the full-service schools in their efforts to work towards the inclusion of learners with special needs and the provision of appropriate services for these learners (DoE, 2001).

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) previously referred to as DOE oversees basic education in the South African system. Each of the nine province in South Africa has an education department that takes responsibility for overseeing the work of the education districts in each province. Each district has a District-based support team (DBST), who takes responsibility for the support services provided to the schools in the district. The DBST includes professional staff who are responsible for the provision of efficient intervention for all learners in need of support assisting teachers to provide support to learners who face these challenges (DoE, 2005:21-22). The DBST does this in close cooperation with the School Management teams (SMT) and the School-based support teams (SBSTs). The School Management Teams (SMT) are responsible for management and governance in collaboration with the School Governing Body but also has a responsibility in supporting and promoting inclusive education (Walton and Lloyd, 2011:12-13).

However, the responsibility to support and promote inclusive education mainly rests with the DBSTs and the SBSTs. School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) are mandatory for all schools, including special schools, full-service schools, and mainstream schools (DoE, 2001). The SBST, should be established and supported by the DBST. The SBSTs final composition is influenced by the context in which the school is situated, but should at least include the teachers with particular expertise, the principal or deputy principal, professionals such as an occupational therapist or psychologist, and the parents of the learners with special needs

(Landsberg, Krüger & Swart, 2016). The principal or deputy principal is part of the team on a part-time basis and has a particular responsibility in the team. All the responsibilities of the SBST should be divided among the members and can include co-ordinating meetings to taking minutes and making sure that comments and minutes are being kept for future reference.

With the assistance of the DBST, the SBST is expected to provide a support service that will assist learners to achieve their goals by using a systemic process. Learners who could benefit from additional support is identified using the process of the screening, identification, assessment, and support as described in the policy document (SIAS, 2014).

The efficient application of the SIAS process plays a pivotal role in the optimisation of the role of the SBST in taking responsibility for the support of learners with special needs. In the initial screening phase, all learners in a classroom are supposed to be screened by the teacher, with the aim of identifying learners with special needs. According to SIAS policy document (2014), the SBST should apply a systemic method that includes the analysis of teacher-kept records on learners with special needs. The SBST, based on this information should then design a programme to aid both classroom teachers and parents to support the learners. The systemic process also requires that the SBST evaluate and monitor the proposed programmes and adapt these programmes for their successful implementation in the classroom. The SBST must offer adequate training to educators so that they can effectively execute these programmes for the benefit of all learners who may be experiencing difficulty in school. Parental involvement, collegial support and sharing of resources form part of classroom support and the achievement of goals. The collaboration with the SMT is essential, as the SMT is supposed to take the initiative to provide supplementary learning and teaching assistance initiatives, particularly for learners who face more challenges due to their special needs. According to Walton and Lloyd (2011:12-13), teachers play a crucial role in ensuring the success of inclusive education programmes since they interact with learners on a daily basis. Therefore, the importance of the SBST in providing support for teachers should not be underestimated.

Research conducted by Stofile (2008) indicated a lack of support for the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. Pilly & Di Terlizzi (2009) add that as a developing country the infrastructure to support the inclusive education ideal falls short). This leads to a gap in the provision of much needed opportunities for all learners to reach their potential (Smit and

Mpya, (2011). Dreyer (2008) adds that the assistance designed to remove obstacles to learning, is not properly implemented in mainstream schools. These limitations result in the limited functioning of the SBSTs which are often not properly coordinated (Tebid, 2010:61-67). Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016) argue that if the SBST is properly coordinated teachers will be better motivated to support learners. According to these authors, teachers often do not understand the purpose and functioning of a SBST, which leads to limited functioning of these teams that becomes evident in reluctance take responsibility for learners with special needs.. Stronger monitoring and support should be offered if favorable outcomes are to occur for both teachers and learners (Pillay &Terlizzi, 2009). Johnstone (2009) suggest that one-time workshops with little or no follow-up support typically do not yield to widespread implementation, and thus they promote the idea of continual support for those expected to implement the inclusive education policies. In this explorative study the voices of SBST members and teachers are foregrounded in an attempt to understand how the functioning of the teams can be optimised to address the problem.

1.3 Problem statement

The Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS, 2014) policy, provides a framework that serves as a basis for the work of the SBSTs in schools. SBSTs should therefore be active in implementing the SIAS policy. The implication is that School-based support teams should be equipped to fulfil a dual role, which involves supporting teachers to support learners with special needs in their classrooms, while concurrently supporting learners with special needs. The problem observed in practice, is that the functioning of the SBSTs with reference to addressing the needs of learners with special needs, are not fully aligned with the expectations set out in the policy documents. Recent research confirm that despite SIAS training, the teachers and members of the SBST are still unable to implement the policy efficiently (Hodgson, 2018; Kgothule, et.al., 2017). This limitation has specific consequences for learners with special needs. Consequently, it seems imperative to establish how the the functioning of the SBSTs can be optimised in providing support that could benefit learners with special needs to reach their potential. The research literature to date focus mainly on the identification of factors that restrain the functioning of the SBSTs, while limited attention is

given to ways in which the functioning can be optimised. The gaps identified in practice and research will be addressed by answering the questions below.

1.4 Research question

Main research question

How can the functioning of School-Based Support teams, be optimised to facilitate more efficient support for learners with special needs in primary school classrooms?

The following sub-questions guided the study:

- How do teachers perceive the role of SBSTs in the facilitation of support for learners with special needs in primary school classrooms?
- How do SBSTs enhance the sustainable implementation of the proposed support in primary school classrooms ?
- What are the barriers associated with the sustainable implementation of the proposed support for learners with special needs?
- What are considered as best practices for the provision of support by SBSTs?

1.5 Purpose, aim and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study is to contribute to a more efficient implementation of inclusive education by optimising the role of the SBSTs in primary school contexts.

The main aim of the study is to establish how the functioning of School-Based Support teams can be optimised to facilitate more efficient support for learners with special needs in primary school classrooms.

To reach this aim the following objectives are set:

Investigate how teachers perceive their role of SBSTs in the facilitation of support for learners, with special needs in primary school classrooms

Establish how SBSTs enhance the sustainable implementation of the proposed support in primary school classrooms.

Identify barriers, associated with the sustainable implementation of the proposed support for learners with special needs in primary school classrooms.

Identify best practices for the provision of support by SBSTs.

1.6 Research paradigm, design, and methodology

1.6.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is a set of guiding philosophical assumptions that shape the research and inform the researcher decisions about the design and methodology (Mertens, 2005). The intention with this research is to take a critical stance towards the functioning of the SBSTs in the South African context. In that, sense a transformative research paradigm is applicable. In line with this paradigm, the initial intention was to apply a participatory action research design and methodology to allow the participants in this study to be participant-researchers who could contribute throughout the research process. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic it was not possible to apply a transformative paradigm and a participatory action research design and methodology. Instead, a social constructivist paradigm was applied to inform the design of a basic qualitative study.

1.6.2 Research design

As indicated in paragraph 1.6.1, the researcher initially intended to use a participatory action research design, but had to revert to a basic qualitative research design. A participatory action research design would have been impossible in view of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, since it required direct contact with larger groups of participants.

Qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the perspectives and experiences of those who are involved in the study, and seek to comprehend and explain the meaning that participants attach to their worlds. (Merriam, 2009). Through a subjective perspective, qualitative research recognises the researcher as the primary data collector (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

1.6.3 Research methodology

1.6.3.1 Research methodology

The methodology describes how the study was conducted, including how subjects were selected and what procedures were put in place to gather information that will be used to answer research questions and guide the research process (Henning et al, 2004).

1.6.3.2 Selection of research sites

For this study, five schools in a circuit in the Cape Winelands District were selected. The circuit manager and the learner support coordinator expressed a need to gain insight into the functioning of SBSTs in a specific circuit. The five schools were selected for participation in this project based on the fact, that they had functioning School Based Support support teams and confirmed their interest to participate in the research process.

1.6.3.3 Selection of participants

This study focuses on the optimisation of the SBSTs functioning with reference to the support for learners with special needs in primary classrooms. The sample in this study included teachers who were members of the SBST as well as teachers who were not members of the School Based Support team, as well as the learner support coordinator for the circuit. Purposive sampling was applied to select the participants. Nonprobability sampling methods like purposive selections implies the selection of participants who will be able to provide the most relevant information that could be representative in describing the phenomenon (Babbie, 2007:184).

Teachers from each school who were not members of the the SBST were selected based on their experience in the specific phase that they represent. The teachers were selected based on the following criteria 1) have more than five years' experience of teaching in a mainstream classroom context 2) a clear understanding of the SIAS process and the principles of inclusive education as demonstrated in their support practices.

Teachers who were members of the SBST were selected based on their role in the SBST and their interest in enhancing the role of the SBST in supporting learners with special needs.

The learning support coordinator as the person responsible for the training and monitoring of the SBST and represent the district in which the schools are situated was conveniently selected based on the position.

1.6.3.4 Data collection

Data collection in qualitative research entails an in-depth, non-numerical analysis of qualitative information to unearth hidden meanings and correlations (Babbie, 2007). As indicated in paragraph 1.6.1 the researcher initially planned to collect the data through a participatory action research process that included a World Café event. However, this data collection strategy was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the data was collected in 2 phases:

In Phase 1, the researcher used a qualitative research questionnaire, developed with input from the learning support coordinator and the co-supervisor. The development of questionnaires for qualitative research is an art. A questionnaire for qualitative research should be appropriate, understandable, unambiguous, impartial, able to accommodate all possible responses, satisfactorily coded, piloted, and ethical (Stone, 1993). According to McKenna et al. (2003), qualitative questionnaires should involve members of the population of interest to ensure that the questionnaire accurately reflects their perspective and contains items that are acceptable, comprehensive and relevant to their condition. This study's population, then, included both SBST members and non-members, as well as the learning support coordinator. Participants were capable of providing thorough responses to the questionnaire based on their experiences of support provided for learners with special needs.

In Phase 2, the researcher conducted online semi-structured individual interviews. Individual, semi-structured interviews enable a researcher to obtain in-depth and complex responses, from the interviewees (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Conversations in ordinary life are similar to semi-structured interviews, but they also have a clear goal and method (Kvale& Brinkman, 2009). It is in between a casual chat and a strict questionnaire in terms of structure. An interview guide is developed to outline for topics and questions to ask (Kvale& Brinkman, 2009:27).

A challenge in this study experienced due to the Covid-19 pandemic was that the interviews needed to take place in the Western Cape, while the researcher was located in Mpumalanga at

the time and not allowed to travel due to the restrictions. Following a consultation with the supervisor, it was agreed that semi-structured interviews with each school's SBST chairperson, will be conducted via Skype. The learner support coordinator of the Circuit also participated via Skype on behalf of the DBST.

1.6.3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the information gathered over both periods. Thematic analysis is an adaptable strategy for extracting, analyzing, and reporting on recurring patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:6). The analysis process is iterative and cyclical in nature and involves going back and forth between data collection and processing in particular where a phased-approach is applied. The data was transcribed verbatim and analysed by applying the six phases of data analysis, identified by Braun & Clarke, (2006) These phases include: Familiarising oneself with the data, creating preliminary codes, identifying for themes and subthemes reviewing themes and subthemes that have emerged, defining and naming these themes and subthemes and finally, presenting the findings in the research report.

1.7 Rigor of the study

The rigor and trustworthiness of this study was enhanced through the application of the criteria for enhancing trustworthiness developed by Lincoln and Guba (1990) as well as relevant criteria developed by Tracy's (2010). These criteria and the application thereof in this study are discussed in chapter 3, paragraph 3.7.6.

1.8 Ethical considerations

Anyone conducting research should be familiar with the consensus between researchers on what constitutes ethical and unethical conduct. Permission for the research was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at North West University and the Western Cape Education Department.

The ethical clearance number for this study is: NWU-00628-19-A2. A detailed description of the ethical considerations as applied in this study is presented in Chapter 3, paragraph 3.6.

1.9 Key concepts

SIAS process

The Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) is a South African policy document that sets a framework for inclusive education and provides standards for helping learners who are experiencing difficulties in school. According to the Department of Basic Education (2014), the purpose of the SIAS policy is to, “identify, assess and provide programmes for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in school” (p.12)

The Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive Education and Training system

The Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System is a policy document that was written post-apartheid (Department of Education, 2001). White Paper 6 recognizes that all children can learn and are in need of support. It entails recognizing and appreciating the reality that each learner is unique and hence has specific requirements, to succeed. It involves respecting and acknowledging differences in learners, including those based on age, gender, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic background, disability, and HIV status, and adapting educational structures, processes, and learning approaches accordingly.

School-Based support team

The School-Based support team takes responsibility for providing support in the school: from helping teachers and learners overcome learning challenges to consultations with parents and liaising with community stakeholders to make sure everyone is getting what they need (DOE 2001). The team should consist of the learning support teacher, other teachers with specialized knowledge in learning support, the school principal or vice-principal, the student's parents, and a representative from the district support team. The referring teacher should also be present during meetings where a particular child's support is discussed (Landsberg, Krüger & Swart, 2016).

Barriers to learning

Problems that develop in the classroom and hinder the learners' needs from being satisfied are called "barriers to learning" (White paper 6, 2005). Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016:15) argue that *“any factor that restrains learning is perceived as a barrier to learning”*. There are two types of learning barriers: those that come from the outside (extrinsic) and those that come from within (intrinsic). To put it simply, extrinsic barriers are those that exist outside of a person, for example, poverty, abuse, crime, violence in a neighbourhood, gangsters and home language that differs from that being taught at school. Intrinsic barriers are conditions within the person. Children are usually born with these barriers, for example visual- and hearing impairments, sensory impairments, and physical impairments.

Special needs

The term "learners with special needs" is used since the primary focus is on the needs of learners who, due to their unique circumstances, demand modifications to the school curriculum. In education, "learners with special needs" are those who have cognitive, physical, or sensory impairments; chronic illnesses; or psychosocial issues to the extent that they may need assistance with the learning process (Laamanen et al., 2021). Furthermore, Reiser and Dempsey (2012) propose classifying learners with special needs along four dimensions: visual participation, auditory involvement, movement involvement, and cognitive engagement, and state that these four categories are the most commonly used when considering the provision of support for learners with special needs.

1.10. Structure of the study

Chapter 1: Conceptualising the research

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and overview of the literature

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter 4: Presentation of the findings

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction
2.2 The history of inclusive education in South Africa
2.3 The history of inclusive education internationally
2.4 Definition of inclusive education
2.5 Types of schools in the South African education system a) Mainstream schools b) Special schools c) Full-service schools
2.6 Definition and functioning of the SBST
2.7 Definition and functioning of the DBST
2.8 Challenges experienced by Support teams (DBST and SBST)
2.9 Challenges experienced by teachers
2.10 Collaboration between teachers and support teams
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2.12 Theoretical Framework
2.13 Conclusion

Table 2: Overview of chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

This presents an overview of relevant research literature, starting with a global perspective of inclusive education, to set the stage for the study. This is followed by an in-depth examination of the development of inclusive education within the South African schooling system; problems that by the support system within the South African education context; the role of the School and District Based Support Teams and the challenges teachers encounter within an inclusive education system.

2.2 The history of inclusive education in South Africa

The first pledge for "Education for All" (Inclusive) was made in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. The plan's stated objective was to make the primary school available to all children. Keeping this goal in mind, efforts were concentrated on making sure that illiteracy rates dropped by the year 2000. (UNESCO, 1990). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Population Fund all agreed on the need for this innovative approach to primary education. Schools are urged to follow inclusive education principles in the Salamanca statement from 1994, Spain (UNESCO, 1994) so that learners from all socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, and cognitive backgrounds can participate in regular classes. For inclusive education to be successful, it must focus on the dedication of educators, parents, families, and volunteers who are all invested in the concept of inclusion and ready to work together. This implies that communities are required to develop a healthy and positive environment for learners who need inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994).

According to UNESCO (2010), despite the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that require equal opportunity in school participation, children with learning disabilities and physical disabilities are left behind. More than a billion people around the world are handicapped (World Health Organization (WHO) 2011). These disabilities include intellectual, learning, social, emotional, physical, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, disability influences families negatively worldwide. Being left behind is one of the greatest concerns because even with a disability you should be able to learn. Despite

teachers' enthusiasm for inclusive education, Campbell, Gilmore, and Cuskelly (2013) note that many believe children with barriers learn best in specialized settings. Therefore, it seems that learners with disabilities should “earn” their way into a mainstream classroom. Education that ensures all learners, including those with special needs, have equal access to academic resources is known as "inclusive education" (Kozleski, Waitoller & Gonzalez, 2016). The only way to guarantee that these learners with disabilities do not have to "earn" a place in the classroom, but that everyone is welcome even if they require special accommodations, is to provide them with access to general education classes. Dreyer (2008) argues that the success of inclusive education depends on teachers and support staff adjusting to their new roles and giving learners with learning barriers the assistance they need.

There were compelling reasons for South Africa to adopt inclusive education. There was no racial segregation in the classrooms, and the Department was dedicated to ensuring that all learners had the opportunity to attend school (DoE, 2001). Only 20% of learners with barriers were accommodated in the school system as a result of Apartheid, meaning that the majority of these learners were referred to special schools. Other learners were lost in a failing educational system. For all learners to succeed, South Africa places a premium on respect for individual rights and fair treatment in the classroom (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). Human dignity and human rights were included in South Africa's constitutional rights (Act 108 of 1996) for all citizens as a means of redressing historical wrongs. Human rights, the pursuit of equality, and the improvement of educational opportunities are all included in this act. Post- 1994 the South African government used international policies and reports, the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to contribute to the formulation of a plan for a human rights and dignity-centered curriculum. Principles of social justice, human rights, and the development of human resources were also central to this framework (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). The Education White Paper 6, the legal policy to create an inclusive education-and-training system, was first introduced in 2001. Its origins can be traced back to 1997 when inclusion was first implemented. Murungi (2015) explains that the Education White Paper 6 was divided into three phases from 2001 – 2021. To put Inclusive Education into practice after 1994 involved short term steps in each phase. First, from 2001 to 2003, then from 2004 to 2008, and finally from 2009 to 2021, are the intermediate time frames. Schools undergoing the transition to full-

service status are implemented during these stages. Creating a school system that welcomes all learners has been a challenge in South Africa. One of the reasons is that schools are under-resourced (DoE, 2001:9). As acknowledged by Engelbrecht et al (2015), no current method of teaching is simple to alter because of the time and effort required. Therefore, schools should receive help from the Department of Education to implement inclusive education. Some schools offer a full range of services, including those that will facilitate the process of inclusion. The results given by educators, parents, and learners show that inclusive education remains questionable (Engelbrecht & Van Deventer, 2013).

Teacher training geared toward inclusion can help meet the needs of many children for whom support was previously unavailable by altering teachers' attitudes toward inclusion (Donahue & Bornman, 2014). Therefore the South African education support system includes the Department of Education which provides a national policy and framework for support; each province has a Provincial department that implements and coordinates the framework of support; District-Based support teams who provide integrated support to institutions; and the institution-level support team (SBST) who identifies and addresses barriers to learning in the local context. Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support governs the make-up and operations of the aforementioned institutions (SIAS) (DoE, 2014). These services aim to eliminate or significantly reduce any obstacles to learners' learning by strengthening the foundation essential to the success of inclusive education.

The South African Department of Education implemented six overarching strategies to create an inclusive education system:

- 1) enhancing current programmes at special schools (converting them into inclusive resource centers);
- 2) mobilization of school-age learners with problems who are not in school but could be;
- 3) changing some mainstream primary schools into inclusive learning environments;
- 4) training teachers and administrators in traditional schools in the principles and practices of inclusive education;
- 5) adoption of inclusive practices by teachers is supported by district-level support teams;
- 6) including the rollout of a statewide advocacy campaign to raise awareness among South Africans about the value of encouraging the full inclusion and participation of disabled learners and citizens (DoE, 2001).

By implementing these above-mentioned

strategies, we ensure that inclusion does not stay a paradigm shift but is seen as a shift in practice (Swart & Pettipher, 2016).

2.3 The history of inclusive education internationally.

In 1990, Jomtien, Thailand made the first global pledge to insure the availability of quality education for all. The target date for achieving this result was the year 2000. This vision for education for all was shared by various organizations such as the “Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Population Fund and the World Bank.”

Many declarations had an influence on the inclusive education system (Tremblay, 2007; Peters, 2003: 68; UNESCO, 1994: 6; UNESCO, 2006; Knochen & Radford, 2012: 151; Chhabara, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010: 224; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010: 91-95; Irvine et al., 2010: 74; Thomazet, 2009: 555; Engelbrecht et al., 1999: 25). These systems are:

- The “Charter of the United Nations (1945)”;
- The “Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)”;
- The “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)”;
- The “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976)”;
- The “World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (1982)”;
- The “UN Convention on the Right of the Child (1989)”;
- The “World Declaration for Education for All (1990)”;
- The “United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability (1993)”;
- The “UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994)”;
- The “Expert Group Meeting on International Norms and Standards Relating to Disability (1998)”;
- The “Dakar Framework for Action (Education for All) (2000)”;
- The “Incheon Framework for Action (Education for All) (2015)”.

Even with these proclamations in place, many difficult educational issues and social perspectives persisted. The practice of special education classes or schools with disabilities was compulsory in the 1950s (Kisanji, 1999: 196 – 199). These practices began to be questioned because learners with barriers could not cope with a regular curriculum (Kisjani, 1999: 196 – 199); these learners were singled out, stigmatized, and left on the fringes of society

(Jenkinson, 1997); a disproportionate number of people of colour were being accepted into elite educational institutions. (Jenkinson, 1997; Wang et al, 1994: 154; Kisanji, 1999: 196-199); regular classroom teachers would not take on the responsibility of children with barriers but would rather refer learners to professionals in special education (Ainscow, 1991: 294; Kisanji, 1999: 196 – 199).

Community members are actively engaged in Canadian schools, helping to support educators and the wide range of learners who attend (Sokal & Katz, 2015). While the phrase "education for all" can mean slightly different things depending on where you are, it always implies that everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances, has the right to an education.

Many countries, South Africa included, have yet to successfully implement inclusive education despite the support of many organizations (Nguyet & Ha, 2010; Geldenhuys & Weyers, 2013:14). South Africa and the other nations that pledged to provide universal access to education met again in Dakar, Senegal, to assess their progress over the past decade. After discussions, they realized that the goal of education for all had not been met. In 2005, the newly established objectives were reevaluated. Six fresh objectives were established, with three of them having strict deadlines. With a predicted 50% increase in literacy rates and gender parity in the classroom, it was thought that by 2015, all children would have completed a quality primary education (UNESCO, 2006). South Africa's inclusive schooling model was shaped by this agreement.

2.4 Definition of Inclusive Education.

Inclusionary education is defined as "the process of expanding learners' access to and participation in schools," according to Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building on Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001:3). It is based on the idea that every student has the capacity to learn and should be given the support they need to flourish academically. As Barton (2003a) explains, the goal is not just to keep the student in class, but to get them involved as much as possible. It is a framework built on the premise that every student has the capacity to learn and needs support to flourish.

2.5 Types of schools in the South African education system

There are three distinct types of educational schools in South Africa. These schools are a) schools that fall under the category of "ordinary school" as described in the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001). These schools cater to the average learner who can function in school with low-intensity support. b) Special schools are schools with the resources to serve learners who require intensive assistance. These learners will be incapable of functioning in a mainstream or full-service school (DoE, 2001). c) Multi-level instruction, student collaboration, creative problem-solving, and a focus on learners' individual strengths are all emphasized in full-service schools, rather than the remediation of learners' deficits (DBE, 2010).

a) Mainstream schools

Mainstream schools serve both learners who require only minimal academic support and those who have no such obstacles to their education. The DBST and other local specialized schools provide assistance to teachers at mainstream schools.

b) Special schools

This school provides an education for learners who require intensive help. Special schools are resource schools to support mainstream and full-service schools. Not only do they provide support, but they also offer quality education to their learners, allowing them to develop and learn in as many ways as they can. To provide assistance to full-service and mainstream schools, the Department of Education (2008:22) explains that special schools must coordinate with the DBST. Included in this aid is the provision of resources for learners as well as the training of educators in inclusive education. Helping regular schools roll out the screening, identification, assessment, and support strategy (SIAS) is a responsibility of special education institutions as well.

c) Full-service schools

To assist their neighbours in making the change to inclusive education, full-service schools were transformed from typical primary institutions into ones where a School-Based Support Team (SBST) could provide assistance on-site (Engelbrecht et al, 2016). One approach to

inclusion is to use schools that provide a full range of services. A full-service school is one "that will be equipped and supported to provide for the full range of learning needs among all our learners," as defined by the White paper 6 and the Department of Basic Education in 2015. (DoE, 2001). The Department of Education has a strategy to reform schools during the next two decades. Traditional elementary schools will undergo a metamorphosis with the aid of the required financial, technological, human, and pedagogical resources and the life-long learning of its teachers (Engelbrecht al., 2016). Full-service reducing labels and stigmas could serve as a model for social change. These schools need to back the idea that everyone has some responsibility in the learners' education. Schools that provide for all learners' needs must work toward ensuring access, equity, quality, and social justice. Full-service institutions work to foster a feeling of community among their learners, teachers, and families. By decreasing bias, educators may create a more welcoming environment for learners of all backgrounds. This generates an atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation for the uniqueness of each learner who enters the building (DoBE, 2010a). To prove that all children of school age can gain from an education, full-service schools offer a wide variety of support programmes (DoE, 2010). Therefore, the objective of full-service schools is to promote a change in how schools view learning barriers and disabilities.

To accomplish the above-mentioned success in full-service schools, White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) states that full-service school teachers will be supported, hence enabling them to deal with learners and teach them to realize their full potential (DoE, 2001). By enhancing their skills, educators will be better able to support learners to gain entry to the curriculum in a variety of ways. Full-service schools are accountable for devising approaches to encourage diversity and foster institutional reform to meet these various challenges. Appropriate education and facilities should be offered in response to diversity and to meet a variety of learning barriers. This will address the unique demands of each learner and the obstacles encountered by each learner. Facilitators, easily accessible spaces, the ready availability of expert services, and well-established networks will all be necessary to realize this goal. Examples of these accessible buildings would be wheelchair ramps, wheelchair toilets, ablution facilities, and classrooms that are accessible to all (DoBE, 2010d).

The effective implementation of full-service schools requires a cooperative approach to working with all key stakeholders. There are many stakeholders in this process, including

learners , teachers, parents, neighbours, and both regular and alternative schools in the area. A group of advocates is essential for any school, whether it is a special education school, a traditional public school, or one that provides a wide variety of services. The School-Based Support Team is a part of the larger District-Based Support Team.

2.6 Definition and functioning of the SBST

Teachers, school administrators, and learners all work together in one place to form a school-based support team (Makhalemele & Nel, 2014). The SBST is a structure that needs to support the teacher in the inclusive process, which will include support in challenges faced by the teacher. SBST, as proposed by Kovalesski, Tucker, and Stevens (1996:44), is meant to aid in the development of intervention strategies and the sharing of information of relevant materials to educators so that they may better assist learners, who are having difficulties. Difficulties occur when trying to accommodate a wide variety of learners ' needs in a single classroom setting (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 1999:52). The SBST needs to provide in-service training for teachers and enhanced assessment skills; establish networks within the community and school; track learner development; oversee the placement of learners where necessary; share resources and ensure parental involvement (Landsberg, 2012).

According to South Africa's Constitution, Act 108 of 1996, "Every child has the right to basic education". Keeping this in mind one should know what “basic education” entitles. Every child has the right to a basic education, which includes instruction and classroom resources.

If we refer to “education for all” it is important to keep the internal and external factors that contributes to the educational output of a learner. According to Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016), external factors include conditions outside of the person such as family systems, abuse, crime, violence, gangsterism, lack of simple things like water, home lifestyle, and home language. External factors also include the school in which systemic problems and pedagogical causes play an important role. A lack of learning materials, facilities that are not available at school, and the lack of mother tongue instruction are just a few of the systemic problems in a school. Teachers who are not properly trained, an inflexible curriculum, and classroom management are just a few of the examples of pedagogical causes. Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016) describe that intrinsic barriers are problems inside the person. These include medical conditions and medical

disabilities. Health problems, learning difficulties, visual impairment, auditory impairments, epilepsy, physical impairment, and autism are just a few of these intrinsic factors.

Inclusive education describes a system that welcomes learners with special needs into the regular classroom setting (Engelbrecht and Green 2001:4). According to the DoE (2008:99), close to home assistance is the goal for all learners. Therefore, the SBST is central in the facilitation of collaboration between educators for the benefit of their learners (Department of Education, 2001). Through collaboration, they are able to determine the requirements of both learners and teachers. Nel et al. (2013) suggest that to provide efficient support necessitates collaboration between the SBSTs and the DBSTs. The SBST can achieve this by recognizing and responding to the needs of learners, teachers, and the institution as a whole. The SBST is supported by the DBST and offers a comprehensive range of educational support services (Department of Education, 2001). The primary role of the DBST is to assist schools in establishing and maintaining School-Based Support Teams, as well as to provide ongoing support to existing teams. One of the benefits that full-service schools should take advantage of is the opportunity to work together with district-based support teams and special schools (Makhalemele & Nel, 2014). According to the Department of Education (2002), the SBST is responsible for:

- coordinating various forms of school-based assistance;
- determining individual academic requirements and obstacles;
- making arrangements that work for the teacher as well as the learner;
- teachers' ongoing professional development, which involves the identification, assessment, and support of all learners;
- putting in place support systems to meet the demands of learners, parents, and teachers;
- modifying educational programmes and creating innovative teaching methods;
- promoting resource sharing;
- ensuring parental engagement;
- supporting teachers on-site and monitoring learner progress.

A learning support teacher, the referring teacher, an inclusion expert teacher, the principal, any members of the DBST, and the student's parents should all be on the SBST to carry out these

responsibilities effectively. Each of these members has a responsibility to the team. By grouping all these responsibilities together the team can make new suggestions to help the learner. DBST is the next level of support provided when high-level school support cannot be coordinated.

2.7 Definition and functioning of the DBST

To guarantee the smooth implementation of inclusive education, districts should set up a District-Based Support Team (DBST) (SIAS, 2014:35). The DBST seeks to assist all teachers who require assistance (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Teachers will benefit from these teams because they will learn new strategies for addressing learners who have disabilities and other learning difficulties. The purpose of the DBST is highlighted in Education White Paper 6 as follows: “To support all learners, teachers, and the system as a whole, so that the full range of learning needs are met”. Only by prioritizing approaches to education that are useful for all learners can this be accomplished (DoE, 2001). Learners cannot achieve their greatest potential without access to structured and expert support programmes. These programmes might be provided directly or indirectly to the teacher. Makhalemele and Nel (2014) states that research has shown that teachers and learners acknowledge the importance of formal support. District-Based Support Teams (DBST) are an example of the type of extensive support that was sought in White Paper 6 on Education (Makhalemele & Nel, 2014). Consequently, the DBSTs role is to help educators pinpoint and eliminate obstacles to learners’ success (Engelbrecht et al., 2016).

The DBST should be adaptable to the school's and learners ' needs (Landsberg, Krüger, and Swart, 2016:97). For flexibility, different specialists assist on the DBST. Department of Education health and welfare specialists including psychologists, counsellors, and therapists are all part of the DBST (Makhalemele & Nel, 2014). These members should possess certain competencies such as serving as assessors of learning, being evaluators of resources, identifying learning needs, functioning as curriculum specialists and developers, and materials developers, addressing particular health, social and psychological problems, acting as counsellor for learners and being organizational, leadership and financial management experts (DoE, 2005:22-23). Not only do they provide support as specialists but also offer teacher and classroom support which includes specialized learner support where necessary. According to

Mfuthwana (2016), they also aid in the development and operation of Institutional Level Support Teams (School-Based Support Teams). Barratt (2016) claims that the majority of DBSTs in South Africa are ill-equipped to assist both learners and educators within an inclusive learning environment. This is due to people's general unfamiliarity with the inner workings of schools and their respective responsibilities within the schools. There is a widespread belief among educators that they were not given the tools they needed to help learners with diverse learning styles overcome obstacles (Engelbrecht et al. 2001:157).

2.8 Challenges experienced by Support teams (DBST and SBST)

The responsibility of supporting all children does not only rest on the shoulders of the educator but is also the responsibility of a formal education support service. These formal education support services include the SBST, which supports at the school level, and the DBST who support at the district- and school levels. This guarantees that learners receive enough assistance in their efforts to realize their full potential. Dropout rates are lowered, which is beneficial to learners' success in school (Ning & Downing, 2012).

Datta's (2015) findings show that both educators and learners value the effect that formal support has on their education. Learners have benefitted from formal support, however, Nel et al. (2014) found that the DBST lacks the necessary skills to effectively aid both teachers and learners in an inclusive setting. According to Makhalemele and Nel (2015), this could be due to the SBST encountering various challenges in carrying out their functions in South Africa. It appears that the key problems are: 1) inadequate or distant assistance that is offered. All members should understand the challenges involved in addressing and identifying barriers in children with special needs; 2) a shortage of both material and human resources. This causes problems because they are unable to identify who should be involved in support provision. 3) Training provided by the Department of Education (DoE) to execute inclusive education policy is inadequate, and the DoE is unable to connect district support methods to regional, provincial, or national goals. 4) There is unawareness of the role they can play in school communities because they cannot work together as a team. The conclusion is that when the SBST is not functioning properly the DBST will not function effectively either. Groom et al. (2005) clearly state that inclusive schools should encourage collaboration amongst the DBST, SBST, parents,

and educators. This collaboration will help with the planning, teaching, and support of learners with educational barriers. Working together collaboratively will enable schools to:

- 1) to identify what is needed and address the needs;
- 2) make it possible to follow procedures that will bring in the right personnel;
- 3) make sure schools recognize and appreciate intersectoral work;
- 4) ensure that resources are readily available and being used effectively;
- 5) learn how the different sectors and professions work;
- 6) learn to empathize with the difficulties experienced by others;
- 7) learn useful techniques for collaborating with others (Lehlola 2011:24; Mbengwa 2007:74).

2.9 Challenges experienced by teachers

Children's learning is significantly impacted by their teachers (Waitoller et al, 2013). The role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning implies that the teacher interacts with meaning, intention, and transcendence to expand the cognitive capacity of the learner (Feuerstein & Lewin-Benham, 2012: LOC 257 of 5004). Teachers should therefore take responsibility to provide support for all learners. To implement this support it is important to consider the roles of the teacher, presented in the policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (DHET, 49 -50). These include:

- 1) The teacher as interpreter and creator of educational programmes and materials – to be able to apply what they've learned in novel contexts, educators must comprehend and make sense of the supplied learning programs.
- 2) The teacher as leader, administrator, and manager – it is the responsibility of teachers to assess their learners' abilities and set a good example for their learners.
- 3) The teacher as assessor – the teacher should be familiar with the content of CAPS, which will help learners to assess their work and review their knowledge;
- 4) The teacher as community and citizen member, and pastoral caregiver – teachers should include the community starting with the parents in the learning process and be supportive when a learner seems to display needs of an emotional and physical nature;

- 5) The teacher as student, researcher and lifelong learner – teachers have the responsibility of change and the transformation of education; therefore, teachers should be lifelong learners;
- 6) Teacher as subject/discipline/phase/practise specialist – teachers should be insightful in the principles, skills, methods, procedures, knowledge and values relevant to their subject, making them lifelong learners.

Referrals to special schools for learners with special needs were common practice prior to the implementation of inclusive education. Children with any learning barrier or disability were singled out. Special schools accepted a large number of learners with severe disabilities (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). This practice were based on the belief that it is beyond teachers' expertise to teach these children. According to Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, and Eloff (2003), teachers who had learners with barriers in their classrooms experienced significantly more stress. This is due to the amount of paperwork that needs to be completed, the behaviour of the learners with the disability or barrier in the classroom, lack of collaboration with parents, and support services. Therefore, learners with special needs are negatively impacted when there is a lack of support for teachers within an inclusive education system (Engelbrecht et al, 2003). According to Dreyer (2013), even if teachers are neither educated nor qualified to teach learners, with barriers, the move to inclusive education needs them to accept these learners into the classroom.. Even though inclusion is not always perceived positively, teachers should remember that inclusion has two advantages: it enhances learner engagement and decreases exclusion (Du Plessis, 2013). According to Donald et al (2010), inclusiveness implies the valuing of individual differences..

Teachers in the inclusive classroom face a range of responsibilities. Some of these tasks include looking into learners ' inexplicable absences and recognizing signs of child abuse that may be present in their classrooms. These challenges can be faced on various grounds. Overcrowding and a lack of funds for essential teaching resources are only two of the problems that classroom teachers have to deal with every day. Not enough human resources and teachers that are not qualified to teach children are also a problem. Societal factors such as poverty, late or early enrolments at school, and drug abuse are the challenges faced by teachers in the community itself. Pedagogical factors that also cause challenges include insufficient support for teachers, unfair assessment methods, and negative attitudes. Challenges with the language

of instruction, a lack of community and parental involvement, and a rigid curriculum are just a few examples of the problems that stem from inadequate or nonexistent support services. Resources, such as textbooks and specialized tools, can be used to overcome these obstacles (Department of Education, 2002:72).

Lehlola (2011) states that keeping the above-mentioned responsibilities in mind and the given curriculum, it is understandable that the teacher's work is complicated. Teachers not only have the duties listed above, but they must also constantly observe and monitor their learners' progress. It takes extra effort and time to cater to a wide variety of learners, whether or not they have special needs.

Razali et al. (2013) found that educators are more receptive to learners when they feel confident that they could provide support. However, this author also alludes to the fact that educators often lack information on the severity of learners' disabilities. Teachers may not have received the training they needed to effectively implement inclusive education policies, as also found by Nel et al. (2013). Swart and Pettipher (2011) concur that in order to teach effectively in a diverse classroom teachers must have the skills to effectively manage differences, how to teach in different ways so that everyone can learn, and have specialized knowledge about disabilities and barriers. Based on this it is evident that the quality of teacher training is the key to making inclusive education work.

For teachers to successfully implement inclusive education, teachers need to develop skills. These skills are more than a once-off workshop. Continuous support is the only way to ensure sustainability. Donohue and Bornman (2014) and Makhramele and Nel (2015) found that the failure to effectively implement inclusive education was due to a lack of educated teachers and a lack of support services.

2.10 Collaboration between teachers and support teams

Research indicates that educators in South Africa play a pivotal role in making classrooms more welcoming to learners with disabilities (Bothma, Gravett, & Swart, 2000; Davies & Green, 1998; Mamlin, 1999). This might not be the case for every teacher. The reason, therefore, is that every teacher has different experiences of inclusive education. Their views on inclusive education are shaped not only by their personal experiences but also by the

challenges they face when learning in an inclusive setting. Researcher Agbenyega (2007) found that some educators have a negative attitude toward learners who are disabled. Teachers considered learners with barriers unsuitable for mainstream education. Therefore, they would prefer them to be placed in special schools. Teachers invested time attempting to support these learners with impediments and limitations. Agbenyega (2007) claims that the lack of professional knowledge and abilities among educators is the root cause of the widespread acceptance of inclusive education. The absence of support from parents and learners, as well as the collaboration between the teacher, the SBST, and the DBST, might be the key to changing teacher attitude towards inclusion.

Florian and Linklater (2011: 371) propose that teachers with expertise in working with learners, who have special needs can be involved in the provision of guidance to other teachers. The teachers' confidence in their abilities and their understanding of inclusive education have both benefited from this partnership. Therefore, working together is essential for inclusive education to be fully realized. Hay and Beyers (2011), also argue that for learners with disabilities and other barriers to participate fully in the educational process, all parties involved must be willing to work together. An inclusive classroom is one in which the teacher and support staff work together to create an atmosphere in which learners with barriers and disabilities are treated on an equal footing in terms of communication, shared responsibility, collective decision making, problem solving, shared resources, and accountability (Nel et al., 2014:906; Sapon-Shevin, 2010; Scorgie, 2010:699). Collaboration is very important between the teacher and support teams. It is clear from Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model that the learner, the instructor, and the support staff all play significant roles in the learning process and are involved in a web of interrelated and mutually influential interactions (Swart & Pettipher, 2011: 16). Therefore, all cooperative role-players provide comprehensive support for learners who face barriers and disabilities.

Teachers are unable to help learners because there is little cooperation between services like the School-Based Support Team (SBST) and the District-Based Support Team (DBST), as reported by Nel et al (2014). Research has found that DBST does not function effectively and cannot support teachers in the process of inclusion. Nel et al (2010) also concludes that in many schools SBSTs do not function either and therefore teachers are left behind in the process of inclusive education. Supporting learners who face challenges due to barriers and disabilities

requires teachers to independently identify these challenges and devise solutions through means such as adaptive learning programmes, resources, instructional strategies, assessment methods, and continuing professional development (Nel et al., 2014:904; Schoeman, 2012:18). Teachers can better serve all of their learners, not just those who fit a certain demographic, if they receive strong preparation in both their initial teaching experience (ITE) and their ongoing professional development (CPD) (Forlin, 2012). This indicates that teachers in service must be supported at the school level so that they can deal with certain barriers that learners face every day in the classroom.

Continuous training for staff members is crucial to a successful inclusion initiative (Waitoller et al, 2013). Not only is the collaboration between support teams and teachers important, but the collaboration with parents as well. According to Okeke (2014), educators must keep open lines of communication with the families of learners who face additional challenges as a result of their impairments. These parents must realize that they play a vital part in their children's education and support.

2.11 Best practices in support

In South Africa, "inclusive education" is a central principle. This method of instruction is consistent with the laws and principles of the country's constitution. It acknowledges the uniqueness of learners with special needs and their struggle against their exclusion. Different policies reflect inclusive education. These policies are:

- “Education White Paper 6: Special Education Building an Inclusive Education and Training system” and;
- the “Screening, identification, assessment, and support (SIAS) policy”.

Both, will be discussed and analyzed as examples of successful inclusive education policies in South Africa.

2.11.1 Implementation of the SIAS document

The goal of the SIAS policy for learners with barriers and disabilities is to improve and coordinate their educational experiences. The document improves classroom dynamics to stimulate student engagement (SIAS, 2008: 8). The goal of this policy was to meet the requirements of every student in South Africa. Those learners who are most at risk of being

left behind will receive the help they need so that everyone has access to a good education (DOE, 2008: i).

2.11.1.1 The purpose of the SIAS policy

The point of the SIAS plan of action is to provide a curriculum that features structured interventions carried out in classrooms and schools. The SIAS policy governs the operation of both the School-Based Support Teams and the District-Based Support Teams. These teams aim to maximize support at the school and district levels. This will benefit all learners who require additional assistance to boost their classroom involvement. Learners who are unable to fully access the curriculum may benefit from the following ideas:

Screening

It is the responsibility of teachers to identify learners who may have learning difficulties at the beginning of each school year. In other words, the instructor needs to find out some fundamentals about each learner's background before beginning to teach. This includes knowing the background of the learner and previous experiences that the learner might have had. The learner's strengths and weaknesses, as well as their family and home environment, should be known. With this information, educators can determine whether or not a student is experiencing difficulties in the classroom due to learning and development issues (The National strategy on SCREENING, identification, assessment, and support, 2008:12).

Identification

The SIAS policy specifies steps to be taken to determine the needs of each student. This can be included in both home and school content. In this way additional support can be established. Teachers, administrators, district-level support teams, school-level support teams, full-service schools, special schools as resource centres, and parents all have roles to play in ensuring that all learners have meaningful opportunities to participate in class.

Assessment

This procedure involves identifying, collecting, and analyzing information about learners. The primary goal of the evaluation is to provide data on student performance and development. An assessment has important aspects, such as:

- Efficiency and effectiveness in the classroom are boosted by assessment.
- It compiles data that can be used as benchmarks to improve instruction in the classroom;
- It allows for the evaluation of classroom performance and teacher competence;
- It encourages learners to have an honest assessment of their own skills and requirements;
- It updates parents on their children's development;
- It gives the principal and teachers an idea of how much work is being done in an all-inclusive classroom.

Learners' assessment should reflect the learner's identity, knowledge, and understanding as well as the learner's learning process and knowledge demonstration.

Support

Effective teaching is made possible with the help of this method, which is implemented in educational institutions. Assisting learners by providing them with appropriate classroom settings and qualified instructors can help remove many of the obstacles to education (Institutional level support Manual, 2009:7).

With the right kind of help, teachers can improve their learners' abilities so that they can contribute more actively in class. According to Bornman and Ross (2010:49), this support includes:

- “Speech therapy”;
- “physiotherapy”;
- “occupational therapy”;
- “intervention of psychologist”;
- and “social workers”.

Wheelchairs, communicators, aids for the visually impaired, and other forms of assistive technology can also play a helpful role. Splints and braces, aids in the classroom, and extra personnel are all examples of prosthetic support.

2.11.1.2 Support systems related to the SIAS policy

The policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (2014:16) clearly outlines three support systems. These support systems are the teacher; the School-Based Support Team and the District-Based Support Team.

Teachers need to identify barriers that learners may have. They use classroom-based interventions to help support the learner in need. School-Based Support Teams respond to the teacher's request for assistance. To offer direction and assistance, they examine the present teacher support plans and compile additional data. They will ask the District-Based Support Teams for assistance when necessary. The DBST responds to the request of the SBST. They provide recommendations, programs, services, and resources that will support the SBST.

2.11.1.3 Addressing barriers to learning by implementing the SIAS policy.

In the learning process, learners inevitably encounter difficulties. There are obstacles to overcome in the neighbourhood, at home, at school, in the classroom, and with one's health. These difficulties also include socioeconomic factors, attitudes, a rigid curriculum, language and communication, unsafe environments, insufficient support services, not enough parental participation, disability, and a lack of appropriate teaching and support materials. These aforementioned obstacles cause barriers to and thus, difficulty in learning. Therefore, it is crucial for South Africa's inclusive education system that the SIAS policy is carried out effectively.

According to Stofile and Green (2009:53), the policy's effectiveness will hinge on how the curriculum is adapted to meet the requirements of all learners. Overall curricular change is necessary to accommodate diversity in the learner population. This transformation includes:

- taking a look back at the curriculum in its totality;
- learning programs;
- teaching methods;
- capability of teachers;
- determining the results of instruction;
- equipment;

- means of instruction and instruction medium;
- and how help is provided.

In order to, successfully implement the SIAS policy teachers need to be enhanced in terms of empowerment, competencies, and capabilities. The following resources would make the SIAS policy more effective:

- **Suitably qualified and experienced teachers:** Classes at a mainstream institution are difficult and intense. Therefore, they need teachers with expert knowledge to provide appropriate teaching. In an inclusive classroom, teachers who aren't properly trained and educated will struggle to meet the needs of their learners. Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa, and Moswela (2009:52) are of the opinion that teachers need to develop skills and knowledge that are different from the ordinary teacher in the mainstream classroom. This will implement effective and efficient inclusive education.
- **Pull-out services:** The pull-out services imply that mainstream schools have facilities to implement pull-out services. This means that the learner with the barrier doesn't have to be in a mainstream classroom the whole day. The learners are pulled-out to attend special programmes to help them with their barriers to learning.
- **On-site technical assistance:** Technical assistance includes the services of professionals on-site, for example, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and support experts. The classroom teacher and the professional work together to support the learner with a barrier.
- **Teacher capacity development:** Teachers play many roles in the classroom. This can be as a counsellor, minister, parent, or social worker. For teachers to address these roles in the life of learners they need to be adequately prepared.
- **In-service teacher training:** For the successful implementation of the SIAS policy, teachers need to continue in-service training. This will ensure more efficient and effective classroom teaching in an inclusive setting.
- **Knowledge and skill training approach:** Keeping up with the ever-evolving demands of learners, parents, and the larger community is a major problem for South African educational institutions (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2007:265). This includes advocacy programs to facilitate attitude change about inclusive education.

For the provision of useful services, it is crucial to develop the competence of all sectors involved in an inclusive education environment and to work together effectively.

2.11.2 Education White Paper 6: Special Education Building an Inclusive Education and Training system.

The implementation of Education White Paper 6, is the responsibility of all school and community stakeholders. In view of the critical role teachers play, the vast majority of research studies on inclusion have focused on teachers' perceptions of and experiences with the policy (Howell & Lazarus, 2008; Mayekiso, Mdikana & Ntshangase, 2007; Ntombela, 2011).

Key strategies are provided by the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) about the implementation of support structures. The key strategies are implemented, at the national level, provincial level, and district level. The Department of Basic Education's role at the national level is to develop policies. The goal of these policies is to guarantee equal educational opportunities for all learners to actively participate in lifelong education, and achieve success to improve learners' quality of life. At the provincial level, the nine provincial departments of education are responsible for the implementation of the policies. These duties include activities such as fund-raising, school construction, the doling out of funds and supplies, the hiring of educators and therapists, and the acceptance of learners with special needs (DoE; 2005:7). Districts within each province are responsible for overseeing inclusive education. The district-based support team (DBST) are mandated to provide professional support to ensure the inclusion of all learners. The teams include (DoE; 2005:17-18):

- Therapists, teachers specializing in assisting learners with learning difficulties, specialists in the field of disability, etc.
- A curriculum specialist to provide help and support to teachers regarding the curriculum.
- A management specialist to provide guidelines and management skills.
- A team of accountants and secretaries to handle financial and administrative details.
- Support Staff with Specialized Knowledge.
- Government professionals

- Family and community role players.

2.12 Theoretical framework

The bio-ecological systems theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), provides a sound basis for understanding support for children with special needs in the context of inclusive education. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, states that the developing child functions and are influenced by the proximal interactions of a multi-layered context (Murphy, 2020) that comprise of five differentiated layers. These layers include:

The microsystem referring to the immediate structures, with which the child has contact including their family, teachers and peers;

the mesosystem referring to the connection between the immediate structures in the child's microsystems;

the exosystem referring to the systems in which the child is not directly involved in, but which can affect their development and functioning, such as parents' place of employment;

the macrosystem referring to the larger societal context in which the child develops, including various cultural and societal norms, customs and values which influences the child);

the chronosystem referring to the changes that took place over time.

The diagram below provides a visual representation of the bio-ecological systems model

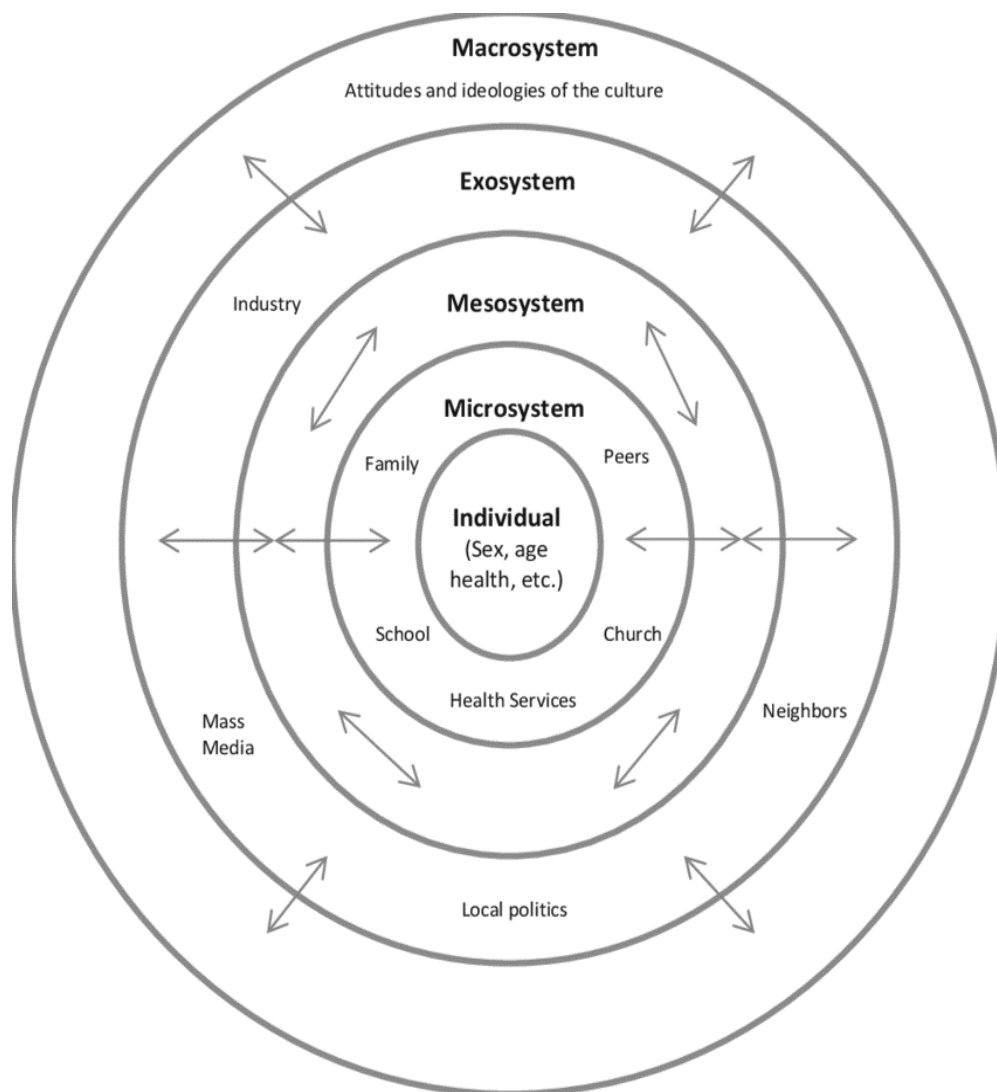


Figure 1: Bio-ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977 cited in Oppenheimer, Soto and Agosto, 2017).

The child is viewed as an active participant in his/her learning and development, as a response to various levels of environmental relationships and influences. The various human and institutional relationships available to the child are envisioned as, a series of systems layered concentrically around the child, similar to a Russian Matryoshka doll (Walker & Pattison, 2016).

In this study, the emphasis is on the role of the school as a microsystem, that impacts on the support of learners with special needs. Berns (2012:18) adds to the significance of the microsystem by stating that it represents the core structures within which the child develops. All the microsystems in which the child grows and functions are connected. The interactions the child has with their parental figures will for example, impact on the interactions they have within their school setting (Murphy, 2020). This as indicated refers to the mesosystem, which acknowledges the reciprocity between the various settings in the child's microsystem. In the mesosystem, the school and the family of the child with special needs should meet to support the child in the best possible way to ensure optimal development. The factors occurring in each of the settings in which the child participate will have an impact on the support provided for the child or other key participants in the microsystem might participate. This interaction between these two microsystems is too a large extent orchestrated by the SBST with the aim of developing a support plan for the child.

The exosystem should also be considered in the support rendered to the child with special needs. Examples of ecosystems include the education system, health services, parents' place of work, the media, and others. These mentioned examples could influence the relationships between other microsystems in the child's life. A significant factor is the way in which parents or caregivers work environments and the way in which these environments might accommodate their situation. If parents, are for example not allowed to take time of for meetings with parents, the impression can be created that they do not care or avoid contact with the parents.

The macrosystem involves the beliefs, social and economical structures, and attitudes of different cultures. This level has influence when it comes to inclusive education. The macrosystem has an impact on the microsystems in which the child is engaged, for example, social justice, equity, equality, and freedom from discrimination. For the macrosystem to be successful in inclusive education, it should be embraced by all the microsystems including families, school and classroom systems, and professional services.

The interactive dimensions identified in Bronfenbrenner's recent work (1998), include person factors, process factors, contexts and time. In this study the two dimensions that should be considered when investigating the optimisation of the SBSTs functioning in schools includes

person factors, which implies that the behavioural tendencies of teachers, parents and learners should be taken into account in the planning of support for learners with special needs. In addition, the existing patterns of interaction between these roleplayers (process factors) should be understood and addressed as part of the support plans. The proximal processes that involve interaction with people, objects and symbols are central to the continuation of the support for learners with special needs.

2.13 Conclusion

The policies governing the implementation of inclusive education are clear, but the implementation remains an ongoing challenge, due to the country's complex history. According to Donohue et al. (2014:3), these complexities increase the difficulty of implementing inclusive education. . The role of the the SBST therefore needs to be optimised in order to enhance the support for learners with special needs in all school contexts. The focus in the research literature has mainly been on the factors that restrain the implementation of inclusive education. Limited attention has been given to the optimisation of the role of the SBSTs. In this study the intention was to explore the functioning of SBSTs in five primary school contexts identified as schools with a relatively functional SBST to establish what would contribute to the optimization of the the functioning of the SBSTs in their contexts. The research was conducted with consideration of the role that all the various systems play in the support of learners with special needs as proposed by the bio-ecological systems theory.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Research paradigm
3.3 Research design
3.4 Research methodology
3.4.1 Selection of research sites
3.4.2 Selection of participants
3.4.3 Data collection
3.4.4 Data analysis
3.5 Rigor of the study
3.6 Ethical considerations
3.7 Conclusion

Table 3: Overview of chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

As described in Chapter 1, the main aim of this study was to determine how the functioning of School-Based Support teams can be optimized to provide more effective support for learners with special needs in mainstream primary school classrooms. Given the study's focus on five distinct primary schools, it was crucial to also look at teachers' perspectives, as they play a pivotal role in making inclusive education a reality.

This section describes the strategy used to answer the research question. As presented in the first chapter, the main research question is: How can the functioning of School-Based Support teams be optimised to facilitate more efficient support, for learners with special needs in primary school classrooms? The sub-questions that guided the study was,

1) How do teachers perceive the role of SBSTs in the facilitation of support for learners with special needs in primary school classrooms?

- 2) How do SBSTs enhance the sustainable implementation of the proposed support in primary school classrooms?
- 3) What are the barriers associated with the sustainable implementation of the proposed support for learners with special needs?
- 4) What are considered as best practices for the provision of support by SBSTs?

In order to provide a solution to the aforementioned research question, an understanding of the research process is required. The research process is discussed with reference to the research paradigm,

3.2. Research paradigm

The research paradigm is described by Johnson and Christensen (2009) as a shared perspective held by a community of scholars similar assumptions, concepts, values, and practices. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) state that “paradigms are all-encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their inquiry along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and methodology” (p.6).

In this study, the initial intention to use a participatory approach that is aligned with a transformative paradigm, the researcher had to divert to a basic qualitative design due to the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore used a social constructivist paradigm. The social constructivist paradigm, identify research, in particular qualitative educational research, as research that discover the meaning and understanding of a phenomenon, through the researcher’s active involvement of the construction of meaning (Kim, 2014).

3.3 Research design

The research design is the methodological framework that guides the gathering of data and evidence to address the study's central topic. According to Leedy (1993), this structure entails planning, visualizing data, and using that data throughout the entire study process. Mouton (2001), considers the research design as the researcher's "blueprint" for executing the research. For Durrheim (2006), it encompasses a strategic framework that bridges the gap between theoretical speculation and applicable findings.

As indicated in paragraph 1.6.1, the researcher planned to utilize a participatory action research design. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic regulations, it was not possible to apply a participatory action research design, since it implied face-to –face engagement with participants.

As a result, the researcher has to revert to a basic qualitative study design. To gain insight into a phenomenon, qualitative researchers listen to and learn from the study's participants. The researcher is acknowledged as the principal data collector from a subjective point of view in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Meriam (1998), qualitative research improves our practice because it allow for the interpretation of individuals' perceptions and expereinces as a basis for understanding a particular phenomenon.

3.4 Research methodology

The methodology describes how participants were selected what methods were applied to collect data used to answer research questions and guide the research process (Henning et al, 2004) and how the data was analysed.

3.4.1 Selection of research sites

The research sites for this study included five mainstream primary schools in a circuit in the Cape Wineland School District. The schools were selected, following discussions with the circuit manager and the learner support coordinator in which these schools were indicated as having functioning School-Based Support Teams and would therefore be able to contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon.

3.4.2 Selection of participants

Merriam (2009) states that what matters most when selecting participant in a qualitative study, is how much people can add to the understanding of the phenomenon through their own unique perspectives and experiences. The same author adds that reliable sources “understand the culture or phenomena being studied but are also able to reflect on it and articulate for the researcher what is going on (p.107). In qualitative research, the sampling of research participants therefore encompass purposive sampling, described by Durrheim (1999) as the identification of specific categories of individuals who can contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, in this case the functioning of the SBSTs.

The population for this research included the teachers in primary schools in the circuit. Participants selected for phase 1, included 8 SBST members, and 7 non-SBST members. All fifteen participants are full-time employees at five public primary schools in the Western Cape. The participants for this study were purposively selected from this population by applying the following criteria: 1) a minimum of five years' classroom experience; 2) experience in the application of the SIAS process and the principles of inclusive education to support learners in a primary school context and 3) an interest in the advancement of the role of the SBSTs.

The learning support coordinator, who has been in charge of SBST training and supervision, in the specific circuit also participated in this qualitative research based on her role and her commitment to contribute to the optimisation of the functioning of SBSTs in the circuit.

Comparing the fifteen participants, the grades taught at the primary level range from grade R to 7. Their years of experience ranges between 4 and 38 years.

3.4.3 Data collection

The initial data collection plan involved a World Café event as part of a participatory action research approach, as described in paragraph 1.6.1 of Chapter 1. Unfortunately, due to the regulations implemented to restrain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, this method of data collecting was not feasible. In line with the shift to a basic qualitative research design, the World Café as an intended method, was replaced with a two phased qualitative data collection process, as described below:

Phase 1

In the first phase of the data collection process, the researcher developed a semi-structured qualitative research questionnaire in consultation with the learner support coordinator and the supervisor. The co-supervisor acted as critical reader and the questionnaire was piloted with one participant and adapted based on the feedback obtained from the critical reader and the participant.

Before distributing the semi-structured questionnaires, the researcher met with the participants (teachers) who were taking part in the study at their respective schools. This allowed the

researcher to explain the aim of the study. Following these brief encounters, the 15 participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it to the SBST coordinator at the school in a sealed envelope for collection by the researcher within two weeks after they received the questionnaire.

Phase 2

In the second phase, the researcher used Skype to conduct individual open-ended interviews using the themes that emerge from the analysis of the data collected in Phase 1 as probes to ensure an in-depth discussion with the SBST chairs at 4 of the 5 primary schools.

Skype was used due to the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The advantage of continuing with the research amidst the pandemic was weighed against the disadvantages of Skype interviews. According (Robson, 2002) the meaning of a response given over the phone or computer may be affected, due to the absence of the interviewee's facial expressions, body language, and other nonverbal cues. These advantages were considered and curbed by allowing sufficient time to engage with each participant to ensure that the research understand their context.

The researcher also conducted a semi-structured individual Skype interview with the learner support coordinator of the circuit with the aim of understanding how the SBSTs are equipped to enable teachers with learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms.

3.4.4 Data analysis

Qualitative research, encompass an in-depth, non-numerical analysis of qualitative data, performed with the aim of revealing implicit meanings and associations (Babbie, 2007). In this study thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data obtained in Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Thematic analysis is a flexible tool for identifying, evaluating, and presenting recurring patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis comprised of six distinctive phases as explicated by Braun and Clarke (2012).

Phase 1: Familiarizing Yourself with the Data

During this phase the data were reading and re-read in order to become familiar with the content and begin to pick up on things which are relevant to research questions.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

During this phase, descriptive and interpretive codes significant to the research questions were identified. The codes were annotated in the separate documents for the questionnaires on completion of phase 1 and for the interviews on completion of phase 2. The codes annotated in Phase 1 informed the development of the prompts for phase 2.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

During this phase the codes generated in both phases were reviewed to detect similar features that could be grouped together to generate themes and subthemes that represent “meaningful patterns in the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thereafter, connections between the themes were identified to obtain a comprehensive view of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thereafter, extracts of relevant data were collated alongside the identified themes in preparation for the next stage.

Phase 4: Reviewing Potential Themes

Braun and Clarke (2012) regard this phase to mainly be concerned with checking whether the themes identified in the previous phase are suitable in relation to codes and the overall data set. Upon engaging with my themes, it was therefore important to interrogate emerging themes in relation to my codes and data to ensure that they reflected the most significant information to contribute towards answering the research questions.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

During this phase, the most compelling extracts from both the questionnaires and the individual interviews were collated with the themes and subthemes to develop a sense of coherence in the patterns of meaning that emerged from the analysis of the data as an interpretive response to the research questions.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

In this final stage, the themes were presented and discussed in a logical way within the broader scholarly framework applied in this study.

3.5. Rigor of the study

In this study, the methods used to collect the data included semi-structured questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews.

The inclusion of participants with diverse backgrounds ensured multivocality (Tracy, 2010). Multivocality implies the inclusion of multiple and varied voices during the analysis and reporting of data to enhance credibility. The researcher chose to include representatives from five diverse contexts to obtain different perspectives and opinions about optimising the functioning of the SBSTs.

The selected parents who had relevant experience was allowed to use their mother tongue to answer the questions and participate in the interviews. The data obtained was translated and checked for correctness through the application of back translation - a 3-step translation quality control method comprising: 1) translating a completed translation back into the original language 2) comparing that new translation with the original text 3) reconciling any meaningful differences between the two.

Tracy (2010) uses the term resonance to refer to the way in which the findings will elicit empathy, identification, and reverberation with the research findings by the audience for which it is intended. In this study resonance was enhanced by formulating research questions applicable and relevant to the majority of school contexts in South Africa. The findings are also presented in detail and with reference the contexts in which the data were generated.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Permission was obtained from the NWU Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Education before conducting the research. The ethical clearance number for this study is NWU-00628-19-A2. In this research, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act no 108 of 1996) and the ethical guidelines for teachers serve as a basis for applying the ethical considerations presented below:

Voluntary participation: Participants were informed about the nature of the study in advance and were given the choice of participation or non-participation. The researcher made it clear that there are no rewards or payments for participation in this study and that this is strictly voluntary. Participants were also given the option to leave the study at any time.

No harm to participants: The researcher set procedures in place to ensure that the participants were not harmed as a result of stating their opinion during the process. To ensure this the research team emphasized a positive solution-focused approach and the importance of maintaining mutually respectful relationships.

Anonymity and confidentiality: The researcher used pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity of participants when reporting the data. Confidentiality was maintained by limiting access to the raw data. Data collected from participants were kept under secure conditions and the information received was only used for research purposes.

Deception: There was no need for the researcher to hide the true nature of the study to prevent the participants from altering their natural behaviour.

Storing of data: The researcher stored the research on password protected computer. On completion of the research the data was deleted from the PC and securely stored on a hard drive at North-West University.

Feedback on findings: There will be a feedback work session with all the participating schools and DBST members, to present the findings and a summary of guidelines for optimizing the functioning of the SBSTs.

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the research paradigm, design and methodology applied in this study were discussed in detail to ensure that the duplication of this study is possible within other school contexts in South Africa.

The results of the study obtained through qualitative methods of data analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DATA AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Research findings
4.2.1 Theme 1: Current functioning of the SBSTs
Subtheme 1.1 The role of the SBSTs
Subtheme 1.2 Detection of learning difficulties
Subtheme 1.3 Support provided for teachers
Subtheme 1.4 Process to enhance support for learners
4.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges concerning the provision of support.
Subtheme 2.1 Prolonged referral process
Subtheme 2.2 Implementation of advice and guidelines
4.2.3 Theme 3: Changes proposed
Subtheme 3.1 More efficient use of time
Subtheme 3.2 Consultations to support teachers
Subtheme 3.3 Enhance communications with parents
Subtheme 3.4 Enhancing relationships
Subtheme 3.5 Teachers accepting responsibility
4.3 Discussion of findings

Table 4: Overview of chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research findings of the study are discussed with reference to three main themes. These themes were identified by coding the data obtained from the participants in this study. A total number of fifteen teachers participated in this study. Each participant received a numerical code to ensure their anonymity.

The table below presents an overview of the teaching experience, the grade in which the participant teaches and if the participant is currently involved in the SBST.

Participants	Teaching experience	Grade	Member of the SBST
Participant 1	7 years	Grade 4	Yes
Participant 2	29 years	Grade 3	Yes
Participant 3	35 years	Grades 1 – 4	Yes
Participant 4	5 years	Grade 5	Yes
Participant 5	15 years	Grade 1	Yes
Participant 6	4 years	Grade 6	No
Participant 7	6 years	Grade R	No
Participant 8	6 years	Grades 5 – 7	No
Participant 9	6 years	Grade 4	No
Participant 10	7 years	Grade 2	No
Participant 11	38 years	Grade 2	No
Participant 12	4 years	Grade 4	No
Participant 13	28 years	Grade 5	Yes
Participant 14	20 years	Grade 5	Yes
Participant 15	34 years	Grade 1	Yes

Table 5: Overview of the participants in this study.

The data sets used to obtain the findings of this study included:

Phase 1: Fifteen questionnaires completed by participants who are teachers in schools in the same circuit – indicated by P 1 to P 15. The participants' responses to the questions when quoted as part of the discussion of the findings are referred to by indicating the participant number followed by the question number e.g P 1: Q 5; P 7; Q 3.

Phase 2: 4 semi-structured interviews with participants who are members of the SBSTs at their schools and play a leading role in the provision of support to learners – indicated as I 1 to I 4. The participants responses are indicated with reference to the questions asked during the interviews e.g. I 1: Q 1; I 3: Q2.

4.2 Research findings

The research findings will be discussed with reference to the following themes and sub-themes.

Theme 1: Current functioning of the SBSTs

Theme 2: Challenges regarding the provision of support

Theme 3: Changes proposed to the function of SBSTs

4.2.1 Theme 1: Current functioning of the SBSTs

The theme refers to the current functioning of the SBSTs as perceived by the fifteen participants from five participating schools in one circuit in the Western Cape. The current functioning is discussed with reference to the role of the SBSTs as described by the participants, the detection of learning difficulties, the support provided to teachers; the support provided to learners.

Subtheme 1.1 The role of the SBST

The role of the SBST according to the SIAS policy is to support the teacher and the learners in the learning process. This support includes the coordination of learners, teachers, and curriculum and school development. Some participants (P1, P3, P4, P7, P12, P13, P14) agreed that the role of the SBSTs is to provide support for learners and teachers.

“The purpose of the SBST is to provide support to the educator as well as the learner who

needs support.” (P3:Q3)

Other participants indicated that this role focuses primarily on learners with special needs who encounter barriers and, consequently, do not perform at the expected level:

“The SBST is responsible for providing support to educators who are struggling with learners who are not at the level of their grade.” (P15:Q1)

“To provide support to all learners who has barriers towards schoolwork.” (P2:Q1)

“Our SBST is responsible for helping educators with learners who are not able to perform so well at their level and at their age.” (P11:Q1)

Important to note was the fact that participants (P4, P6, P7, P8 and P9) who are not members of the SBST and have less than 6 years teaching experience indicated that the SBST only supports the learners with special needs and that the teacher is not part of the solution.

One participant (I3) who has many years of experience as a learning support teacher emphasised that there should be a proper and systematically monitored arrangement in the support given by the SBST (I - 3). In view of the position taken by the 4 less experienced teachers, this seems a very important suggestion.

Subtheme 1.2 Detection of learning difficulties

Participants emphasized that the application of the learner profile is beneficial for the early identification of learners with special needs. According to participants (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P8), this is a very important document. The value of the document is that it *paints a “picture” of the learner in its totality.*” (P3:Q2). This document also indicates a learner’s strengths and weaknesses, background information regarding the learner, and keeps a record of relevant information as noted by P6 (Q2).

The early detection of learners with special needs was also emphasised by a participant who explained how he would conduct continuous assessment with learners from the beginning of the academic year. This participant, for example, used reading tasks to identify reading difficulties early on and then act swiftly to address the problem and diminish the learning

problem before the learner goes to the next grade, as stated by one of the participants:

“... in the few days since I've seen my learners, I've been doing a lot of reading with them, so I could immediately pick up which kids are struggling a little with reading difficulties. That forces me to act faster again and to try to provide support.”(I1:Q1)

“... I did a lot of reading with them, so I could immediately pick up which kids struggle with reading difficulties that force me to act fast ...” (I1:Q1)

Participants also indicated that daily assessments and tests in class help them to identify learners with special needs.

“Here at our school it is largely only on children who have serious learning problems and according to that we give support so it basically assumes that every teacher now picks up his interaction with the child through assessment and daily teaching class tests and so on.” (I1:Q1)

The key according to one participant is to identify a problem as soon as possible to enable the SBST to intervene early so that the learners can reach the expected level of academic achievement as soon as possible. The participants are of the view that this could also curb the drop-out rate to some extent.

“... the learners who do not perform at grade level, they are usually identified as dropouts because they are not at the same level as the other learners in the class and I think then those learners should get support to get to the level.” (I4:Q1)

Subtheme 1.3 Support provided for teachers

In addition to providing support for learners, the SBSTs in the participating school also assist teachers with the identification of learners with special needs by creating spaces in which teachers can share their experiences of learning difficulties, and ask for help from colleagues who may be experiencing similar problems in the classroom. Participants for example indicated that the teachers and HODs meet and discuss learners with special needs (P3, P4, P5 and P12).

During these discussions, teachers can exchange possible solutions and methods to deal with the problems they experience in the classroom. They will also discuss interventions that can be

applied in their classroom contexts. Some teachers will share how they implemented previously discussed interventions and the results achieved as a result of the implementation.

Two participants explained:

“We are a group of members of the school who meet on a regular basis every term to discuss who are experiencing behavioural problems, learning difficulties etc.”(P 4 : Q 4)

“Educators come to the SBST and share with the team the learning disabilities that the learner is experiencing as well as what intervention has already been granted.” (P 3 : Q 4)

“If the learner has a backlog, we will request activities from other teachers to be able to work at the learner’s level.” (P 4:Q4)

Reportedly one of the SBSTs involved in this research also provides support by giving general ideas for working with learners with special needs to the teachers. These ideas are formulated with the help of other teachers from different phases in the school. *“...we will request activities (implemented) by other teachers to be able to work at the learner’s level.” (P4:Q4)*

“Other educators are also involved e.g. Foundation Phase educators are involved with learners in inter-phase assistance” (P2:Q4).

In addition to this teachers are regularly sent for training and workshops *“on how to identify and assist learners with barriers” (P8:Q4).*

The SBSTs in the participating schools reportedly also follow up by referring learners who are identified with learning difficulties or special needs. One participant explained how it is done in her context:

“The learner support educator will contact the occupational therapist and send the forms and letters to the district office or if there are learners who need urgent professional help, the learning support educator should contact the school psychologist at the district office” (P2:4).

A concern raised was the fact that when a learner with special needs is identified by the teacher, the learner needs to be referred to the SBST who in turn refers the learner to the relevant health professionals. Participant P6 noted that referrals are addressed by the SBSTs in their contexts.

The participants emphasised that the relevant health professionals will make contact and arrange to see learners who have been referred with special needs. They perceive the fact that the health professionals would visit the school as an advantage since this implies that the class teachers could also become involved in the treatment of the learner with special needs.

Another advantage of the referral process is the fact that parents are also involved in the support process of the learner with special needs. The parents can contribute by giving their view point on the challenges they experienced with the learner with special needs. This information can help the SBST, the teacher and the outside referral to understand the learners with special needs situation much better:

“Parents will arrange a meeting with the school to have a discussion about the learner and the weaknesses will be explained and also what we can do to help the child.” (P4:Q4)

The problem with the referrals seems to be the fact that feedback for health professionals regarding the specific cases referred might take up to 6 months (P6:Q4).

In most cases, the participants (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P13, and P14) indicated that they were getting adequate help from the SBST. The support given to these participants is in the form of different ideas, an exchange of ideas and solutions with colleagues, the request for activities from other teachers, sending teachers for training, providing workshops on how to identify and assist learners with special needs, withdrawing learners and working with these learners, testing applications and psychologists being called in.

Although the overall experience of participants was that teachers were supported by the SBSTs in their schools, a few participants expressed their concern regarding the support currently given by the SBST. They were aware of the support but they themselves did not receive support. One participant (P9:Q1), in particular, indicated that there is no help whatsoever as stated:

“Currently no help, sometimes to help certain learners by withdrawing from the class.” (P9:Q2)

With reference to current practice, the participants foregrounded the process applied by the SBSTs to ensure that learners are supported.

Subtheme 1.4 Process to enhance support for learners

One of the first stages in aiding learners is determining whether learners have special needs. Once a student with special needs has been identified, the SBST can begin looking for appropriate support services, both inside and outside the school, to meet the learner's needs. The function of the SBST is *to assist learners with challenges more especially learning problems*" (P6:Q3). Teachers meeting with the SBST have the opportunity to discuss and share the learning disability experienced by the learner. The intervention that was done is also discussed and the members can help by giving possible additional interventions before the learner is referred for learning support. Asking the opinion of the members who know the learner and finding out what they have done to help the learner with special needs is of great importance.

"Also offer the class educator a "platform" where he has the courage to ask for help from colleagues who may be experiencing similar problems." (P3:Q3)

According to participants (P1 - P7), parents play a crucial role in comprehending the learning barrier their children face. Parents are considered valuable resources.

"Parents are informed of learning barriers that learners experience and are encouraged to also support learners at home." (P3:Q4)

The inference that can be made from this is that it is important for a teacher that parents also understand and help the learners with special needs. The teacher will be contacted and the parents can be informed about the learner's learning barrier and weaknesses regarding learning.

"Parents will arrange a meeting with the school to have a discussion about the learner and the weaknesses will be explained and also what we can do to help the child." (P4:Q4)

Having informed meetings and approaching parents together with the SBST to let them understand the situation and the consequences, will encourage parental involvement in the special needs of the learner.

"Parents are contacted by the class educator. Parents are told that their son/daughter is

learning disabled and that he/she needs help. Parents must also sign letters. Parents should also help their son/daughter at home.” (P2: Q 4)

When this intervention doesn't have any effect on the performance of the learner in the classroom, professional help will be sought. The learner's parents will sign a letter giving the SBST permission to seek professional help for the learner as stated by the same participant (P2:Q4).

When the process above has been followed and the learner with special needs is still unable to cope, a referral will be made to the relevant health professional who then withdraws the learner from the classroom to conduct a diagnostic assessment.

One participant (P3: Q4) described a successful referral by the educational psychologist from the district. The participant explained that the grade 6 learner was already 14 years old and scholastically very slow. In addition to this he displayed behavioural problems and was often absent from school. The teacher referred the learner to the SBST who referred him to the educational psychologist. The educational psychologist recommended that the learner's workload needed to be reduced to accommodate the pace at which he works. The educational psychologist also contacted the parents and recommended that the learner go to a skills school. In preparation, a visit was arranged to allow the parents and the learner to be *exposed to the opportunities that the schools of skills offers and how it will be beneficial to him in the future.”* (P3:Q5)

The learner is currently in the skills schools and is very happy. He does more practical work and can develop his skills.

Participant P5 shared the case of a learner who experienced learning barriers in the previous grade. The teacher of the previous grade indicated that the learner might have a learning barrier and this teacher observed the same learning difficulty. In this case, the parents were contacted and the learner was referred to a private psychologist. This referral was considerably faster than a referral to the Department.

Several participants (P1 to P7) agreed that these are the only two options currently used by the SBSTS for organising professional help for learners with special needs since they are not aware at this stage of other referral options to other health professionals such as speech therapists, play therapists, and occupational therapists.

In some instances, learners with special needs are attended to in a separate classroom with other learners that also have special needs. Here the learner will feel safe and be in an environment where learning can occur. Winning the trust of the learner is important to help them with their progress.

"... where the child doesn't feel labelled" (I4:Q4)

"Once you have won that child's trust and improved the child's confidence then that's a different story." (I4:Q4)

The abovementioned comments provide more than just support with schoolwork. It is the attendance to a socio-emotional dimension of learning, also focusing on the learner's self-esteem and safety. In collaboration with the student's teachers and parents, outside support may be needed if the learner cannot be helped.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges with reference to the provision of support

The theme refers to the challenges experienced by the participants concerning the provision of support to learners. The teachers reported frustration with the support from the SBST, the prolonged referral process and limitations regarding the implementation of the advice and guidelines given. The following subthemes represent their voices:

Subtheme 2.1 Prolonged referral process

Participants often have to wait up to six months for a referral, which is one of the biggest problems they face. This encompasses the process from the time that 1) the teacher reports the learner with barriers, starting with 2) the completion of the necessary forms for the therapist or psychologist by the SBST, as well as the assessments done and the feedback from the specialist and the SBST.

The participants simply stated: *“Feedback takes sometimes very long.”* (P2:Q4)

“Once a teacher identifies them is sent for referral about 6 months” (P6:Q4)

“It sometimes takes a long time for referrals to the district for feedback. The reason is sometimes that there is only one school psychologist for a large number of schools.” (P3:Q4)

Learners with barriers need daily support and when it takes 6 months to get feedback on external help, there must be sufficient support from the SBST. This does not appear to occur, which suggests that the partnership between the teachers and the SBSTs is in jeopardy, as stated by a participant:

“I basically want to use my previous answer again, because sometimes the planned feedback meetings are not held and this causes the interactions between the SBST team and the teachers to deteriorate later” (I1: Q3).

Subtheme 2.2 Implementation of advice and guidelines

The participants expressed concern about the fact that the support given by the SBST to assist the teachers, is not always implemented by the teacher in the classroom to ensure that the learners’ challenges related to the learning difficulty are efficiently addressed. When the ideas, plans, and programmes are not implemented the challenges might prevail. To ensure that these programmes are implemented, participants proposed that there should be regular meetings with the teachers and feedback given.

“... then the teachers can provide feedback and say what they are struggling with ...”(I4:Q3)

Feedback regarding the work that the learners have done, the intervention of the teacher as well as the work that has been done, in cooperation with the parents, must be submitted to the SBST. This will help to establish if the teacher needs further assistance to support the learners with special needs.

“... the teacher must also present the intervention as well as the learner's work ...” (I1:Q2)

The problem with the presentation of interventions by teachers is that they might perceive the observation as checking, which can be regarded as a top-down approach.

“...it is very top down and this is what you are going to do with the child.” (I2:Q2)

“This is difficult because they need to be followed up and you do not want to sit in class and watch them do what is being said.” (I2: Q2)

According to one participant, planning and monitoring is an integrative process that is ongoing and could establish if teachers need further assistance to support the learners. The correct interaction and follow-up could determine if the help of the department is needed.

“If there could be proper monitoring and plan to guide teachers, routine to follow in dealing with addressing the needs of learners.” (I3:Q2)

Another participant noted that some teachers still don't know how to recognize and support learners with special needs, despite having studied and obtained degrees. This demonstrates the need for teachers to provide feedback to the SBST while assisting learners with special needs.

“...I know we are all professionals at the school now and you have your BEd degree or whatever some people have already received a little more guidance in terms of learner support but many teachers actually did not , I would now almost say very practical experience and recognition or recognition of learning difficulties.” (I2 – Q3)

To be able to implement the suggestion presented here, regular meetings between the teacher and the SBST are very important. Participants (P3, P5 and P15) indicated that neglecting regular feedback meetings creates challenges for teachers and impacts the teacher's perspective in the support of learners with special needs. To be able to provide proof of intervention is important but with no follow-up meetings to give feedback, it is impossible to see if the intervention makes a difference or whether the teachers need additional help from the SBST or department.

Participant (P3) stated that teachers do not always have time for follow-up meetings because *the teachers have a lot of after-school meetings, trainings and tasks to perform...* (P3 : Q4). Teachers feel emotional and feel that they do not have time to attend to the needs of the learners. Thus, the number of learners in the class doesn't make the problem better.

Participant (P9) expressed out that the number of learners alone is not the problem but that these learners need *to have a class large enough for all learners with special needs. They will benefit more from it.*” (P9:Q4). A bigger classroom is one of the resources that teachers need to help them support learners with special needs.

Even though participant (I2) indicated that *our school is smaller and it makes it easier for the teachers to communicate with teachers ...*” (I2:Q1), there still need to be efficient resources in place. Without these resources, the necessary support cannot be provided or implemented. This is why participant (I5) is of opinion that the functioning of the SBST, regarding inclusive education, will never be optimized.

“I just think I do not know if there really is at this stage, I may be negative, but I do not know if SBST teams are ever going to be optimized in our country. Not with the big classes that teachers struggle with anymore, not with the fact that they implement inclusive education without assistants.” (I5:Q4)

Complicated referrals and adhering to provided guidelines are two obstacles associated with the provision of support. In the referral process, which can take up to six months, it is the student with special needs who struggles. The relationship between the teacher and the SBST is negatively impacted by the lengthy waiting period as well. Learners with special needs experience additional difficulties when teachers disregard the SBSTs recommendations and fail to support such learners. In this regard, it is essential that the teacher provides timely feedback on the work and support provided to the SBST. This is because, despite their education, many teachers still need help from the SBST spot learners who have specific needs. Along with the abovementioned difficulties, teachers and the SBST must also deal with difficulties including having frequent meetings, allowing teachers ample time, and providing larger classrooms and efficient resources. Therefore, providing assistance for learners with special needs should be viewed not as an extra burden but as an investment in the learners’ future.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Changes proposed

The theme is related to the different modifications that the study's participants suggested for optimizing the SBSTs functionality. The modifications include better time management,

support for teachers through consultations, improved parent contact, improved relationships, and teachers taking accountability.

Subtheme 3.1 More efficient use of time

The participants emphasised that the SBSTs functioning is hampered by the limited time that teachers who serve as members of the SBSTs have to attend meetings. A participant stated:

“The time factor still remains a challenge because the teacher have a lot of after-school meetings, trainings and tasks to perform and therefore the whole team is not always available for a SBST meeting”(P3:Q4).

It takes too long to complete the process from the moment the learner is reported to the point at which the learner can be evaluated. The referral process takes too long, according to the participants, who also indicate that

teachers say it's too much administration, too much work and so on and later they become negligent” (I1:Q2).

As a result, it has been suggested that when a student with special needs is recognized, the teacher should take the initiative and look into any existing best practice at the school in order to address the issue first. Being proactive will allow the teacher to provide the student with special needs with enough help while waiting for the evaluation.

“... act proactively and put things in place and then if that does not work, you will try to be as proactive as possible and if you need more expertise then go to the SBST” (I2:Q4).

By making the most of the time at their disposal, teachers can operate as a primary source of assistance for learners with special needs. When the learner is evaluated, the SBST can identify what areas require outside support and offer that support. This results in more effective use of time for the benefit of learners with special needs.

Subtheme 3.2 Consultations to support teachers

To attend to the diverse nature of problems teachers face every day, there needs to be a variety of skills, grades and specialists on the SBST. Participants (P5 and P13) indicated that there

should be *more external involvement and a permanent learning supporter*” (P13:Q4).

The external involvements include therapists, psychologists and specialists in the community that can be part of the SBST. This forms a permanent base for learner support that takes place *in the foundation phase and also takes place in the other phases. So that there is less pressure on the educator*” (P14:Q14). They can help by finding solutions for problems and supporting the teachers in the implementation thereof. New innovative ideas to help with the change in support of learners with barriers need to be suggested by the specialist, therapists and the psychologist.

“And of course it is also important that because the problems you have in the school setting experience is too diverse, it is important that the team is also as diverse as can be so that most of the problems, I almost want to say that there must be a person on the team for every problem, so that we know that the problem that may emerge will get the best attention and then in the end only the best solution will gain” (I1:Q3).

Subtheme 3.3 Enhance communication with parents

As discussed above, there should be a permanent base of learner support. For the successful implementation thereof, participant P7 proposed that there should be workshops with the parents.

“Provide workshops for parents” (P7:Q4).

This will involve the parents in the process of support. Teachers should be susceptible to being part of the process of support.

“... if you work with staff who do not buy into it, you have a problem ...” (I2:Q5).

This includes workshops that involve the parents and the teacher. This is one way the teacher can be committed towards support.

“You know, you can have the best expertise on your team, but if no one is committed to the task, nothing is going to happen.” (I1:Q3)

The implementation of support includes the ideas given to teachers by the SBST and from workshops attended. These ideas should not be forced upon teachers. Teachers need to be able to provide their own input and express a professional judgement on the situation.

“... or see if he can tweak it a bit and use it in a different way and own professional judgment and see if he can interpret this class in a different way along with the SBST ...” (I2:Q2)

Subtheme 3.4 Enhancing relationships.

The SBST should establish relationships with teachers in order to motivate them to accept the recommendations and advice provided by the SBST. Building relationships with teachers, according to the participants, will give them the feeling that they are appreciated and that the work they do is valuable.

“He must make sure that the team must function optimally and then he must also, together with the team, create with the teachers the feeling that the work that the teacher is doing, that it does serve a purpose and that it is appreciated ...” (I1:Q3)

Not only will good relations help with the implementation of ideas but it will also be beneficial for the learner with barriers. Teachers can benefit from this relationship by adopting their own plans and combining them with the ideas and advice given by the SBST.

Subtheme 3.5 Teachers accepting responsibility.

This success achieved from implementing learner support begins with fulfilling the smallest responsibilities. This minor duty can be fulfilled by accurately filling out learners' profiles. Two participants (P4, P2) explained the reason for saying that is that the learner profile serves as a source. In collaboration with teachers and the SBST, the profile provides background information and ideas of how the learner was previously helped and supported. The report from the SBST, as well as from psychologists and therapists, is a golden tool in dealing with learners with learning disabilities.

“The learner profile has been created so that whoever comes in from the outside can see exactly who and what the learner is and if it is complete I feel it is a good start.” (P4: Q2)

“The learner profile is an official source of information from the department that the educator completes. The learners' profile is already been completed from grade R and every year through the current grade teacher” (P2: Q2).

Participant I3 feels strongly that a **routine should be implemented together with** the increasing of support so that teachers can be supportive of the physical and intellectual needs of the learners.

“If there could be proper monitoring and plan to guide teachers, routine to follow in dealing with addressing the needs of learners” (I3:Q2).

The one way that the SBST can ensure equality in teacher training and provide vital support, is through regular meetings with the teachers that need this support to help learners with barriers in their classrooms. With regular meetings, the teacher can give feedback that ensures the implementation of necessary support to learners with barriers. If regular feedback meetings do not happen, the teacher becomes negative and demotivated.

“... because sometimes the planned feedback meetings are not held and this causes the interactions between the SBST and the teachers to deteriorate later.” (I1:Q3)

Participant (I1:Q2) indicated that regular feedback from teachers is imperative and that the intervention and work done should be presented to ensure progress.

“And the coordinator must then make sure that those meetings do take place and the teacher must also come and present the learner's work so that we can see that the learner is working on the problem that the learner has.”(PI1:Q2)

“I would say it is important that there is regular feedback from the educators to the SBST so that there is a constant of I want to keep an eye on what is happening in the class because, if we are just going to leave it to the teacher to continue now, at the end of the day it may be that nothing happens.” (I1:Q2)

To guarantee that feedback meetings occur, participant I1 indicated that a coordinator should ensure that regular meetings take place so that the application of the advice and the advice given can be shown. This will establish if teachers need further assistance. The coordinator should clearly understand his or her role in the process and be able to coach the teachers as a team. This team should have a sense of meaning and understand that its main purpose is to give the child an advantage.

“You as a teacher need to meet regularly with this group to ask for their help on how to work with the learners and which learner to test.” (P10: Q1).

“And the coordinator then has to make sure that those meetings do take place ...” (I1: Q2)

The SBSTs role is to help the school identify and meet any additional service

requirements. In this way, teachers can help one another as they work to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. By assisting the teachers, we can improve the results of the learners.

“The purpose of the SBST is to provide support to the educator as well as the learner who needs support. The function is therefore to provide solutions to the teacher that can support the learner such as best practices and methods that can still be tried. Also, offer the class educator a "platform" where he dares to ask for help from colleagues who may be experiencing similar problems.” (P3: Q 3)

“Professional help for learners with special needs.” (PI: Q1)

“The SBST supports the educators who identify learners with learning disabilities. Share good practices with each other, give advice and ensure that processes are set in motion. SBST supports the educators.” (PN: Q1)

The type of support given to learners with special needs can change by teachers being proactive, utilizing best practices, using outside assistance from therapists, psychologists, and specialists for the implementation of support, as well as establishing better communication with parents, and the SBST building better relationships with teachers. Smaller activities like completing the learner profiles, consulting with colleagues, and seeking their guidance are also included in the support changes. Teachers acknowledge their duty to learners with special needs by completing these brief tasks.

4.3. Discussion of findings

Considering the question posed on this study namely: How can the functioning of School-Based Support Teams, be optimised to facilitate more efficient support for learners with special needs in primary school classrooms, the findings reveal the following:

Considering the current functioning of the SBST, as reported in this study, participants agree that the SBSTs should support learners with special needs as well as the teachers who face the challenge of accommodating children with disabilities. However, more experienced teachers indicated that they are not considered part of the solution in the process of developing support for learners with special needs. A learner support teacher with many years of experience

emphasised the importance of developing a system that can include teachers in a more organised manner.

The systematically organised process should include clear guidelines that teachers could follow to identify learners with special needs at an early stage, so that their needs can be met. This, according to the participants can be accomplished, by ensuring that all teachers can utilise the learner profile, daily assessments, and tests more efficiently to identify these learners. Teachers attend training session presented by the DBE, but do not get sufficient guidance to implement the knowledge and skills obtained in practice. Research conducted in the South African context concur that teachers lack adequate assistance in implementing support for students with special needs (Dreyer, 2014; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Du Plessis, 2013).

The participants indicated that informal and formal discussions, where they as teachers exchange possible solutions and methods to deal with the problems they experience in the classroom are very helpful for thinking about ways to support learners with special needs. During these discussions, it is important to have opportunities to share how they implemented previously discussed interventions and the associated outcomes of applying these interventions. These discussions are crucial because they allow the SBST to coordinate efforts to fulfil the needs of the school, particularly when it comes to recognizing learners with special needs. Donohue and Bornman (2014) claim that discussions on ways to support learners will also enhance teachers' ability to manage classrooms with a wider range of special needs learners.

The participants proposed that SBSTs establish a forum where teachers can share their experiences with learners who have special needs and seek advice. This is in line with the guidelines for the implementation of support strategies proposed by the department that teacher should plan together not only with reference to teaching but also with reference to the development of support strategies. (DOE, 2001).

The participants clearly perceived collaboration as an approach that will help teachers alleviate the pressure on them, which in turn will also benefit special needs learners. Nel et al. (2013) concur that collaboration helps all teachers improve their skills and makes it easier to include all learners. Hay and Beyers (2011) emphasise that inclusive education requires collaboration

and calls for a commitment from all participants in the process of including learners who have challenges. The importance of collaboration is also emphasised in a study conducted in the Zimbabwean context, by Majoko (2019).

The SBSTs should therefore enhance collaboration amongst teachers, but also between teachers and parents, the school and the broader community as well as with DBSTs as also proposed by Du Plessis (2013). Nel et al. (2014) specifically emphasised that a lack of collaboration between the SBSTs and DBSTs could restrain the support for learners with special needs and their teachers. Research conducted by Tsotesi and Omodin (2020) emphasise the important role of the DBSTs in the support system and express concern about the impact of their limited involvement.

With reference to the challenges, the participants indicated that functioning of their SBSTs, are restrained by the prolonged referral process. The implication is that learners with special needs often do not get the support they need. The participants in this study suggest that this problem can be addressed by encouraging teachers to utilise their time efficiently. This implies that they do not wait until the learners has been evaluated by the DBSTs before commencing with support for the learner, but start to support the learner in the best possible way while the referral is in progress.

Unfortunately, that gives rise to another problem namely that teachers are not sufficiently equipped with the knowledge and skills to support learners with special needs in their classrooms. The problem of inadequate responses from support services and underqualified teachers has been identified as critical factor in the failed implementation of inclusive education (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Makhamele & Nel, 2015).

In order to address the first challenge, the SBTS's should involve professionals from their communities to be better equipped to guide teachers. The participating schools follow the guidelines for implementing the SIAS process, by involving, the management of the school, teachers working with learners who have special needs, teachers with knowledge and expertise in learner support, teachers who represent the various phases of the school, and individuals who are not teachers but are a part of the administrative functioning of the school.

However for the SBSTs to optimise their functioning should attend more specifically to the

inclusion of professionals, such speech therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologist and social workers (Bornman & Ross, 2010). These professionals could then guide the SBSTs who can in turn provide guidelines for support to learners who are waiting to be referred or might not be referred due to limited space in schools who specifically attend to special needs.

The second challenge, namely teachers' limited knowledge and skills to deal with the spectrum of special needs, concur with the research conducted by Swart and Pettipher (2011) and Razali et al. (2013). Despite the fact that this research has been conducted a decade it remains a challenge even in cases where SBSTs are functioning relatively well. Forlin (2012) argues that if teachers are given opportunities for ongoing professional development (CPD) and are supported by adequate initial teacher education (ITE), they will become more effective inclusive teachers. SBSTs can address the need for ongoing professional development by providing ongoing discussions following the CPD training. Although teachers are supposed to take responsibility for learners in their classrooms, they might need additional support to be able to respond to learners with special needs, since pre as well as in-service training might not have been adequate to support them with the application of the knowledge and skills obtained, if they are not supported.

The optimising of the SBSTs functionality in the participating schools according to the participants in this study could be enhanced by enabling the SBSTs, to work in close collaboration with the teachers to identify learners with special needs early on, so that a support plan can be developed. The implication is that the SBSTs should not function on an ad hoc basis but should be involved in the support process throughout. In the process, the SBSTs should build strong relationships between all the role-players to enhance a collaborative approach that recognises the teachers as an important role-player in the whole process. The collaborative approach should also include parents, professional and community members who can assist with the advice as well as resources that could ensure that support is provided while the referral process is in progress.

The complaints about the delayed referral process have been part of the implementation of inclusive education and are underpinned by a lack of human resources. The SBSTs should in an effort to optimise their functioning make more serious efforts to develop strong working

relationships with professionals in the community who can assist them with the development of guidelines for teachers who have to support learners with various special needs. In this way learners with special needs will receive support as soon as they are identified and not only when the DBST has time to evaluate them.

Below is a summative overview of five guidelines for the optimising the functioning of the SBSTs identified in the contexts where the study was conducted.

1. Adopting a collaborative approach in which teachers are involved throughout the process.
2. Early identification of learners with special needs through the efficient application of the SIAS process.
3. Efficient use of time by providing early interventions for learners with special needs in collaboration with professionals and support networks in the community.
4. The identification of professionals and other community members with whom the SBSTs can consult.
5. Enhanced communication with parents of the learners with special needs.

Despite the fact that policies have been developed on macrosystemic level, schools still struggle with similar challenges that was identified in the early 2000's. The role of the SBST in the implementation of inclusive education which, implies the efficient provision of support for learners with special needs, is to facilitate this implementation in the school as a micro contexts. Despite all the training provided, support for learners with special needs remains a challenge for teachers. The role of the SBSTs as facilitators of the implementation of these policies into practice is critically important in the school as micro-context in which these learners function. The optimisation of the functioning of school-based support teams according to this study should also encompass a pro-active effort to enhance collaboration within the mesosystem, which encompass that teachers and parents should come together to plan strategies to support these learners over time, i.e in the chronosystem.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Summative conclusions
5.3 Recommendations 5.3.1 Recommendations for practice 5.3.2 Recommendations for training 5.3.3 Recommendations for research
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5.7. Conclusion

Table 6: Overview of chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

The objective and expected outcome of inclusive education is to integrate as many learners as possible into a single educational system, regardless of their differences or limitations. In this study, the optimization of the SBST has been investigated in an effort to obtain an understanding of how the current functioning and the challenges experienced with reference to support by the SBSTs in 5 primary schools can inform the development of efficient support for learners with special needs. In this chapter the study is concluded with a summary of key findings and recommendations for practice, training and research. The contribution and limitations are discussed followed by a personal reflection on the outcomes of the study.

5.2 Summative conclusions

The study confirms that a collaborative approach is essential for optimising the functioning of the SBSTs in these schools. This collaboration entails that the interaction between the teachers and the SBSTs should not be a once-off process, but continue from the onset of the identification process. Enhancing the interaction between the teacher and the SBST as well as between the teacher and the learner with special needs enables the early detection of problems. The research revealed that the teacher should not only be required to identify the needs but should also be equipped to initiate a support process so that the time between the evaluation by DBSTs and the identification of learners can be used efficiently to address the needs of the learner in collaboration with parents and consultants identified by the learners.

An important limitation identified in this research is the delay in response to the referral of learners to the DBSTs. This is problematic for the learners with special needs since they do not seem to receive the necessary support while awaiting feedback. In this study, it became evident that the SBSTs should address this gap in two ways:

Firstly teachers should be equipped to provide support to the learners who with special needs. Despite all the training opportunities, teachers seemingly guidance in the efficient implementation of the knowledge and skills obtained through and ongoing mentoring process. This ongoing mentoring role would contribute to the optimisation of the SBSTs functioning.

Secondly the SBSTs should develop a support network that include professional staff and other consultants in their communities who are able and willing to assist with advice and resources that could enable teachers to provide interim support for learners with special needs who awaits feedback from the DBSTs. This might enhance the opportunities for learners with special needs to be supported in an environment that is familiar to them.

The SBSTs should also strengthen relationships with teachers and between teachers and equip the teachers to develop stronger ties with the parents, who are supposed ought to be involved in the support process. A proposition is to allow teachers and parents, the opportunity to participate in support training sessions will make them feel included. This is advantageous for

both the teachers relationship with the parents and their relationship with the learner who has special needs. This facilitates communication between parents and teachers and allows them to discuss the challenges they encounter while assisting learners with special needs. This encourages collaboration among colleagues and allows teachers to assume responsibility for their part in serving learners with special needs.

The findings of this study addresses some of the issues similar to those addressed repeatedly since the implementation of inclusive education in 2001. What emerges from this study is that the same restraints identified in the literature remains due to the fact that the human resources are still limited and schools have not been capacitated effectively to address special needs while awaiting advice from the district. Embracing a collaborative, multi-leveled approach that involve all roleplayers in stead of relying only on the DBE professionals in the DBSTs facilitated by the SBSTs might present us with a way forward.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for practice

The SBSTs play a critically important role in the implementation of policies and practices related to the implementation of an inclusive education system in which all learners should be included in a way that will allow them to flourish and achieve according to their abilities. Learners with special needs are particularly vulnerable in such a system and should be identify as early as possible. The optimisation of the SBSTs functioning should therefore encompass the development of a systematically organised process during which the teacher is fully involved in a process from the identification throught the parental engagement, the development of a preliminary support plan and communication with the DBST on the feedback from the referral. In this way, teachers will also feel recognised as important support agents.

5.3.2 Recommendations for training

In an inclusive education system, all teachers need to be equipped to address the support needs of learners with special education. The fact that teachers completed their degrees and attended

various training session, there still seems to be a lack of understanding their responsibilities towards learners with special needs. In view of this limitation, SBSTs should not merely accept that all teachers are equipped to provide support to learners with special needs. They should instead, provide ongoing guidance either on individual level to teachers who request support or by organising discussions where teachers can talk about the difficulties in working with learners with special needs can be helpful and motivating. It is also recommended that regular workshops are held during which health professionals and consultants from the community are invited to inform teachers about strategies and access to resources that could enhance their support for learners with special needs. More deliberate efforts to engage the DBST should be part of the SBSTs training strategy.

5.3.3 Recommendations for research

The study was conducted in the Western Cape Province. Similar comparative studies could be conducted in other provinces to establish how the functioning of the SBSTs can be optimised across the country.

With reference to the training, there is no doubt that the DBE provides sufficient opportunities for teachers to obtain knowledge and skills to support learners, but that they seems to struggle to apply the knowledge and skills efficiently. It will therefore be important to investigate which strategies could be applied, to address this need for the integration of knowledge and skills into practice and what such a process should encompass.

The participants placed a strong emphasis on the SBSTs communication with parents. Hearing what the parents' experiences are with the teachers when it comes to helping learners with special needs might have been enlightening. It would be beneficial to know how teachers interact with parents regarding various topics. This could be the source of the issue, which spreads across the entire system.

5.4 Possible contribution of the study

Various studies has been conducted to investigate what restrains the functioning of the SBSTs, but less emphasis has been placed on understanding how the functioning of the SBST can be optimised in primary school contexts in South Africa. The findings of this study provide some guidelines for taking the SBSTs forward in the direction of facilitating the inclusion of learners with special needs.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The Covid-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020, altered the course of history. Each nation had laws and regulations in place that had a significant impact on a number of sectors. The researcher was unable to organise a World Cafe event to collect the data due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently the research instead of involving participants in a process where they could actively engage as participants researcher, data was collected through questionnaires and on-line interviews. This situation also ruled out any opportunities to attend SBSTs meetings of the participants' schools.

The language preference of the participant also posed a challenge. English is their first additional language, and they preferred to engage in the study in their home language, Afrikaans.

This implied that the researcher had to translate the data into English. To ensure that important detailed nuances were not lost, the researcher did a verbatim translation and asked a third party to check the translations.

The researcher focused on the perception of the participants regarding the SBST and the support it offers to the learners as well as the teachers. Therefore, the researcher used data collection methods that provide more insight into the perceptions of the participants. The researcher is aware that perceptions are affected by many factors.

5.6 Personal reflection

After making some progress, I plan to take account of my findings and how I feel about them. Consequently, I will provide some meta-reflections (Du Preez & Roos, 2008:700). My overall reflections will be broken down into three sections: what I anticipated, what surprised me, and what disheartened me.

5.6.1 Findings that I expected

I anticipated that participants would signal the SBSTs lack of commitment. I also anticipated that SBST members would highlight educators' lack of commitment. As a teacher with an interest in inclusive education, I was able to gather elements such as the referral process, and current SBST functioning in terms of the 1) role of the SBST, 2) early detection of learning difficulties, 3) adequate support provided for teachers, and 4) processes to support learners who experience learning difficulties. I believe that every learner should have sufficient support to overcome any barriers, and as a result, I may have noticed the lack of support more than others.

I anticipated that not all teachers would feel equipped and trained to assist learners with special needs. My personal experience as a teacher in a mainstream school provided me with insight into educators' perspectives on special education support; consequently, I chose to conduct research in a province where the education system is implemented differently than in the province where I work. The researchers bias was mitigated, by concentrating solely on participant-provided data. I also anticipated that, despite the existence of a well-structured SBST, it would not be sufficient to support teachers in assisting learners with special needs. Moreover, the SBST must provide additional opportunities for teachers to grow and learn how to support learners with barriers. This will provide teachers with a sense of expertise and an awareness of the significance of the support process.

5.6.2 Findings that I did not expect

I did not anticipate that teachers would perceive assisting learners, with special needs as a hardship. I had the idea that teachers always wanted the best for their learners and would go the extra mile to achieve this. I must note that not all educators share this perspective on inclusive education and do go the extra mile to assist learners with special needs. Teachers do

not view themselves as the caregivers of every learner. We assume that teachers enjoy working with children and that learners are in safe hands during the school day. In reality, this is not the case. The same applies to SBST members. Some of them are at the school because of necessity, not out of affection for the learners. This saddens me and is an unpleasant wake-up call for me.

I was astonished by the number of educators who do not know how to assist learners with special needs. The fact that I study inclusive education does not imply that everyone has studied inclusive education. Due to the adoption of inclusive education in 1994, I also anticipated that the current generation of teachers would have the necessary expertise. Once again, I made incorrect assumptions.

I was also astonished to see that parents of learners with special needs do not always cooperate with the given support. At the school where I work, this is not a common issue. I was under the impression that parents encouraged their children to do schoolwork; particularly learners with particular needs. I believe it will be fascinating to hear what youngsters with special needs have to say about the support they receive or do not receive.

However, the fact that they are willing to discuss difficulties and seeking to improve the situation gave me hope. In addition, I realised how crucial it is to make inclusive education training more accessible to educators.

5.6.3 Findings that disappointed me

The findings that disappointed most were, once again, the teachers and SBST members lack of commitment to supporting learners with special needs. I believed that teachers and SBST members would perform this duty with pride, given that we are currently observing the nations future. If we as educators are unwilling to assist these learners, who will? Yes, if you are paid more for your work, you will certainly exert more effort, but money cannot buy the passion and dedication required to help learners with special needs. This is a form of care that a person possesses from birth. You cannot learn to behave in such a way. Unfortunately, the education system lacks sufficient teachers and SBST members of this caliber.

5.7 Conclusion

The department offers rules and regulations to ensure that the SBST works properly. Therefore, the discrepancy between the policies and how these policies are implemented in practice remains a challenge. Most teachers agree that the SBST in their schools act in accordance with the rules and regulations, yet by developing a collaborative process that enhance teacher responsibility while concurrently enhancing community support from relevant stakeholders the role of the SBSTs can be optimised to ensure that all learners are given the best possible opportunity to flourish and achieve positive outcomes.

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ADDENDUM A: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH



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14 March 2019

To Whom It May Concern

RE: Student name: **Mrs S Bezuidenhout**; Student number: **27061086**
(MEd – Special Needs Education)

I hereby confirm that the research proposal of the above-mentioned student was approved by the COMBER Scientific Committee meeting of 20 February 2019.

The Research title referred to Research and Innovation committee for approval is as follows:

Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School-Based Support Teams

Should you have further enquiries in this regard, you are welcome to contact Ms Ronélie van Staden at 018 285 2101 or by email at 20505957@nwu.ac.za, alternatively you may contact Prof L Wood at 018 299 4770 or by email at Lesley.Wood@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

COMBER Scientific Committee

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[REV : 20170310]

COMBER Research Niche Area
School of Psycho-Social Education
Faculty of Education
North –West University
PBag X 6001
Potchefstroom

April 2019 (date to be added)

To:

Dr Audrey Wyngaard

The Director: Research Services

Western Cape Education Department

Private Bag X9114

Cape Town

8000

I herewith wish to request the permission of the Western Cape Department of Education to conduct research in the following schools:

Schools to be indicated once the schools have been selected

Below please find the details of our involvement

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School-Based Support Teams.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof Ansie Elizabeth Kitching (Supervisor) in collaboration with Me Sonja Bezuidenhout (Masters student) and Dr Carmen Joubert (Co-supervisor).

ADDRESS: Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education University of the Western Cape, Robert Sebukwe Road Belville Cape Town Office: Block A Room E06

CONTACT NUMBER: 0828232011/ 021 9592285

This study has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00628-19-A2) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. The research ethics committee members or relevant authorities might therefore ask to inspect the research records.

What is this research all about?

The research will be conducted as part of a Master's study.

In order to build an inclusive education and training system there is a need to protect and advance the rights of people so that all citizens, irrespective of race, class, gender, creed, disability or age, have the opportunity to develop their capacities and potentials. The important role player is the teacher in the mainstream classroom; therefore, teachers should be trained in helping children with barriers to learning to achieve their full potential. Many teachers have stated that they did not receive formal training and development regarding the accommodation of the diverse learning needs of learners in mainstream classrooms. The consequence is a lack of support to successfully integrate learners with disabilities into the general education classroom.

The policy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS, 2014) was developed to provide a framework for the support provided to learners with special needs and their teachers with the assistance of the SBSTs, who should play an active role in the successful implementation of the SIAS policy. Recent research evidence suggest that SBSTs are still not well-equipped to fulfil the role that has been ascribed to them in the policies.

To address this gap in knowledge, the focus of this study will be to conduct participatory action research to establish how the current functioning of existing SBSTs as guided by the SIAS policy can be optimised within the contexts of mainstream schools to ensure that classroom teachers are equipped to support and include learners with special needs in mainstream primary school classrooms.

Benefits for the Western Cape Department of Education

The study will present the WCED with the knowledge to strengthen the capacity of the SBST with specific reference to the referral of learners.

The inefficiency of SBSTs has been considered as one of the key challenges for the implementation of IE. The implementation of the revised SIAS policy and the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning programme to a large extent will depend on the efficient functioning of SBSTs. Therefore this research project might be beneficial to the Department of Education in as far as it will provide a framework for the facilitation of an integrated process to facilitate sustainable holistic well-being that can be applied to other school contexts. Research in this field is therefore of utmost importance to adhere to goals set out in White Paper 6. This study will contribute towards a better understanding of processes proposed by the SBST, which is a fundamental for the support of teachers and learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms. It seeks to explore how SBSTs experience and perceive their roles of support for the teacher and learners. This study will contribute towards a better understanding of processes proposed by the SBST. This is fundamental for the support of teachers and learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms. The school communities in which the research has been conducted might become a more enabling space in which the promotion of well-being are addressed pro-actively. This might bring about a change in the attitude of learners towards their academic work, more nurturing relationships in the school and a more socially just dispensation for all involved. Based on research conducted on the advances of facilitating holistic well-being in a school contexts an escalation in academic achievement might also be experienced in these contexts. Knowledge obtained will inform the optimisation of the SBSTs' role in the implementation of the related policies. The process might also address specific areas relating to the Whole School Evaluation process and assist principals to achieve these goals. Furthermore, departmental officials might also find that some of the objectives are reached due to the implementation of the action learning process at the schools.

Risks involved for participants

The limited risks foreseen for participants in this study include:

- 1) Stress due to limited time in their schedules to participate in the study
- 2) The foregrounding of their frustrations with the current situation regarding their expectations about support for learners with special needs.
- 3) The World Café event may elicit differences of opinion and possible conflict between participants

The precautions that will be taken to address the foreseen risks are:

- 1) The research will plan the research in a way that will ensure that participants' schedules are considered and respected
- 2) Participants will be informed in advance about the nature of the study. Participants will be given a choice between participation and non-participation.
- 3) Procedures will be set in place to ensure that the participants are not harmed by stating their own opinion. Reciprocal respect will be encouraged and participants will be requested to maintain confidentiality.

Dissemination of the findings to the WCED

On completion of the research project, the primary researcher will arrange a meeting with the principal, the School Management teams, the School Governing body and the Well-being support teams to discuss the application of the framework in each of the six contexts.

Thereafter the findings and the suggested framework for implementing the process will be presented to all the participants during a seminar organized for this purpose.

The final results will be made available to the Western Cape Department of Education in the form of a report and a suggested framework for implementing an integrated process to facilitate holistic well-being. The research team will be available for further discussion with the Department should they wish to implement the process in other schools in the circuit.

For any further enquiries or problems you can contact me at 0828232011. You can also contact the Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Erna Conradie at 018 299 4780 if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.

Thank you for attending to our request.

Ansie Kitching, Carmen Joubert and Sonja Bezuidenhout

ADDENDUM B: ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER



**Faculty Education:
Research & Innovation - M&D
Administration**

Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299 4770 / 018 285 2101
Email: 20505957@nwu.ac.za

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

14 March 2019

To Whom It May Concern

RE: Student name: **Mrs S Bezuidenhout**; Student number: **27061086**
(MEd – Special Needs Education)

I hereby confirm that the research proposal of the above-mentioned student was approved by the COMBER Scientific Committee meeting of 20 February 2019.

The Research title referred to Research and Innovation committee for approval is as follows:

Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School-Based Support Teams

Should you have further enquiries in this regard, you are welcome to contact Ms Ronélie van Staden at 018 285 2101 or by email at 20505957@nwu.ac.za, alternatively you may contact Prof L Wood at 018 299 4770 or by email at Lesley.Wood@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

COMBER Scientific Committee

Original details: (20505957) C:\Users\20505957\NWU\Nextcloud\SNTO(X)\Faculty of Education\Letters\2019\Proposals\Edu-Lead\Confirmation of Proposal Approval.docm
13 March 2019

File reference: 9.4

ADDENDUM C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PHASE 1



COMBER

Fakulteit van Opvoedkunde

Noordwes-Universiteit

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

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

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde

COMBER

Tel: 018 299 1111

Email: hannesbezuidenhout1@gmail.com

Datum: 5 Augustus 2020

DEELNEMER INFORMASIE EN TOESTEMMINGSVORM

Hiermee vra ek u toestemming om deel te wees van die navorsing. Hierdie navorsing behels die optimalisering van 'n reeds funksionerende SGOS in jou skool. Voordat toestemming gegee word, moet u, u net verwittig aan die onderstaande inligting.

Die inligting oor die navorsing is soos volg:

TITEL VAN DIE NAVORSINGSPROJEK:

Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School-Based Support Teams.

(Die fasilitering van ondersteuning vir leerders met spesiale behoeftes deur die optimalisering van die Skool Gebaseerde Ondersteunings Span.)

ETIEKAANSOEK NOMMER: NWU-00628-19-A2

STUDIELEIER: Prof. Ansie Kitching Navorsingsgenoot COMBER NWU

ADRES: Fakulteit Opvoedkunde, University of Western Cape, Robert Sebokwe Laan, Bellville

KONTAK NO: 0828232011 EPOS: at akitching@uwc.ac.za

MEDE-STUDIELEIER: Dr. Carmen Joubert

ADRES: Fakulteit Opvoedkunde, Noordwes-Universiteit Vanderbiljpark kampus

KONTAKNO. 074474444 EPOS: Carmen.Joubert@nwu.ac.za

MED STUDENT: Sonja Bezuidenhout

ADRES: Kmdt Lombaard straat , Polokwane, Welgelegen

KONTAKNOMMER: 082 403 8361 EPOS: hannesbezuidenhout1@gmail.com

ETIEKKOMITEE: FAKULTEIT OPVOEDINGSWETENSKAPPE

Kontakpersoon: Me Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

Die studie is deur die Navorsingsetiek Komitee van die Fakulteit Opvoedkunde, Noord-Wes Universiteit goedgekeur en sal in ooreenstemming met die etiese riglyne van die komitee uitgevoer word. Toestemming is ook van WKOD (Dr Audrey Wyngaard) verkry vir die navorsing en Dr Maylene Basson Leerondersteuningshoof van die Kring het u skool aanbeveel.

Waaroor handel die navorsing?

Die doel van hierdie navorsing is om riglyne te ontwikkel vir die optimalisering van volhoubare ondersteuning deur die SGOS aan leerders met spesiale behoeftes in laerskole.

Deelnemers

U is uitgenooi om deel te neem aan hierdie navorsing omdat u aan die volgende kriteria voldoen:

- 1) U het minimum 5 jaar werkservaring in die hoofstroom konteks
- 2) U verstaan insluitende onderwys en die implementering van die SIAS proses.
- 3) U is beskikbaar om 'n aanlyn werksessie by te woon in September 2020.

Wat word van u as deelnemer verwag?

Indien u instem om aan die navorsing deel te neem sal u verantwoordelikheid gekoppel word aan u posisie:

- 1) **As 'n onderwyser** - sal van u verwag word om 'n vraelys te voltooi. Daarop sal u aandui hoe u die huidige situasie rondom ondersteuning vir leerders met spesiale behoeftes verstaan.
- 2) **As 'n SGOS voorsitter** - daar sal van u verwag word om 'n vraelys te voltooi; deel te neem aan 'n onderhoud op Skype en ook 'n aanlyn werksessie wat via Google meet of Zoom sal geskied. Daar sal 'n tyd gereël word wat sal pas rondom u werkskedule.

Voordele vir u as deelnemer

Die voordele vir u as deelnemer is dat u gaan deelneem aan 'n studie wat die SGOS sal help en help beter verstaan wat hulle take is asook die bespreking van probleme en uitdagings aangaande die SGOS. U ontwikkel vaardighede waarby u pro-aktief kan optree en prosesse ontwikkel in verskillende kontekste. Die leerders met spesiale behoeftes in die deelnemende skole sal direk by die studie baat omdat daar 'n duidelike uiteensetting van die rolle van die lede in die SGOS spanne is.

Die indirekte voordeel is dat u skoolgemeenskap word 'n gemeenskap waarin insluitende onderwys pro-aktief toegepas word. Hierdie mag 'n verandering in leerders se gedrag en houding mee bring t.o.v hulle akademiese werk. Verhoudings word gekoester en daar is 'n sosiale dispensasie vir almal wat betrokke is.

Risiko vir deelnemers

Die risiko verbonde aan hierdie studie is beperk. Een van hierdie risikos is dat u gespanne kan voel oor die beperkte tyd in u skedule om aan hierdie studie deel te neem. Hierdie risiko sal in gedagte gehou word wanneer die navorser beplanning doen sodat die deelnemers se skedules in ag geneem en gerespekteer sal word.

U mag ook oorweldig voel oor die verwagting rakende hulpverlening vir leerders met spesiale behoeftes. Daar sal vooraf inligting voorsien word rakende die natuur van die studie wat ook sal help met die besluit om deel te neem en nie deel te neem nie.

Die aanlyn werksessie mag 'n verskeidenheid van opinies opper en moontlike konflik tussen

Ons is oortuig daarvan dat u deelname aan die navorsing enige risiko sal beperk omdat u deel vorm van 'n instrument wat nuwe ruimtes vir u as onderwyser, u mede-kollegas, ouers en leerders sal skep t.o.v leerderondersteuning in die skool sisteem.

Konfidensialiteit en beskerming van identiteit.

Omdat hierdie navorsing plaasvind in die skool sisteem kan slegs gedeeltelike anonimiteit verseker word, omdat mense sal weet dat u deelneem aan die navorsings proses. U anonimiteit sal beskerm word deur dat daar nie 'n konneksie gemaak kan word tussen dit wat u gesê het en dit wie u is. Hierdie sal ook gebruik word in die terugvoer van die data in werkswinkels, besprekings, verslae en joernaal artikels oor die navorsing.

Konfidensialiteit sal verseker word deur alle deelnemers aan te moedig om nie besprekings te hou oor dit wat gesê is in vergaderings; werkswinkels; asook geen identifisering van data in die transkripsie of verslag nie. 'n Ooreenkoms om konfidensialiteit te verseker sal geteken word deur die persoon wat die data transkribeer.

Alle data wat gedurende die aanlyn werksinkel hetsy skriftelik of elektronies ingesamel is sal beskerm word deur 'n wagwoord wat slegs deur die navorser en die navorser assistent bekend sal wees. Harde kopieë van die data sal toegesluit wees in 'n kluis in die kantoor van die navorser terwyl die navorsing in progressie is. Nadat alle data ingesamel is sal die navorser die elektronies data na CD toe oorplaas en die CD sal gestoor word, met alle harde kopieë, in 'n kluis by die Noord Wes Universiteit (Fakultet Opvoedkunde) vir 'n periode van 7 jaar.

Verspreiding van bevindinge

Met die voltooiing van die navorsingsprojek, sal die data geskryf word op 'n CD. Hierdie inligting sal 'n wagwoord bevat. Daar sal 'n werksessie met al die deelnemers, distrik amptenare en die kringbestuurders betrokke wees. Hierdie sal geskied binne drie maande na die voltooiing van die studie.

Indien u enige verdere vrae of navra het aangaande u deelname in die navorsing, kan u die navorser skakel vir meer inligting.

Baie dankie vir u tyd en aandag. Indien u bereid is om deel te neem voltooi asseblief die vorm hieronder en gee in 'n verseelde koevert aan die voorsitter van die SGOS span.
Sonja Bezuidenhout

Verklaring van deelnemer:

Ek,, bevestig hiermee dat ek sal deelneem aan die navorsing, met die titel:

Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School-Based Support Teams. / Die fasilitering van ondersteuning vir leerders met speisiale behoeftes deur die optimalisering van die Skool Gebaseerde Ondersteunings Span.

Ek bevestig dat:

- Ek die informasie en toestemmingsbrief gelees het en verstaan wat word van my verwag gedurende die navorsingsproses.
- Ek het 'n geleentheid gehad om vrae te vra aan die navorser en al my vrae is beantwoord.
- Ek verstaan dat ek deelname aan hierdie studie is vrywillig en dat ek nie gedwing is om daaraan deel te neem nie.
- Ek mag verkies om deelname aan die studie te los en sal nie gepeenaliseer word of benadeel word in enige manier nie.
- Die navorser mag my vra om die navorsingsproses te verlaat voordat dit voltooi is, indien die navorser dit is nie in my beste belange nie, of ek volg nie die navorsingsprosedure

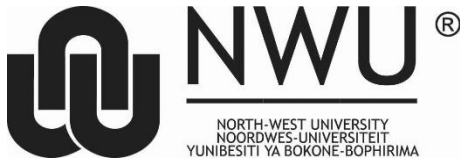
Geteken by(plek) _____ op (datum) ____/____/20____

Handtekening van deelnemer

Mediator

Navorser.

PHASE 2:



COMBER

Fakulteit van Opvoedkunde

Noordwes-Universiteit

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde

COMBER

Tel: 018 299 1111

Email: hannesbezuidenhout1@gmail.com

Datum: 5 Augustus 2020

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

Teachers, SBST chairpersons and DBST officials

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School- Based Support Teams.

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00628-19-A2

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Me Sonja Bezuidenhout

ADDRESS: COMBER Faculty of Education North-West University

CONTACT NUMBER: 021 8643593 / 0828232011

Dear Teacher

I am a Master's student in Special Needs Education at the North-West University. I will conduct research aimed at the optimisation of the functioning of the School-Based Support Team in your school. Prof Ansie Kitching, Associate Professor at the University of the Western Cape and a Research Fellow in COMBER Faculty of Education North-West University will supervise the research project together

with Dr Carmen Joubert, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Psycho-Social Education at the North-West University.

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Please note that your participation should be entirely voluntary and that you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. Your involvement in the well-being initiative in your school will not be influenced by such a decision.

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences of the North-West University (**NWU-00628-19-A2**) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. The research ethics committee members or relevant authorities might therefore ask to inspect the research records.

What is this research all about?

The main objective of this research is to develop guidelines for optimising the sustainable implementation of support proposed by SBSTs for learners with special needs by the SBST in mainstream primary school classrooms.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate because you complied with the following inclusion criteria:

- 1) you have at least 5 years work experience in the mainstream education context;
- 2) you have an understanding of inclusive education and the implementation of the SIAS process
- 3) you are available to complete a questionnaire and engage in on-line conversations in the afternoons during the school term.

What will your responsibilities be?

As a teacher you will be expected to complete a questionnaire indicating how you perceive the current situation regarding support for learners with special support and attend a work session in September 2020 (Via Zoom).

How will you benefit from taking part in this research?

The direct benefits for you as a participant will be that you take part in a study that will help the SBSTs to have a better understanding of their tasks and will have the opportunity to discuss concerns and challenges. You will also obtain skills that will empower you to pro-actively contribute to the development of such a process in other contexts. The other gains of the study is for learners with special needs in the participating schools will indirectly benefit due to the fact that the teams will have a clearer understanding of their role. The indirect benefit will be that your school community will become a more enabling space in which the promotion of inclusive education are addressed pro-actively. This might bring about a change in the attitude of learners towards their academic work, more nurturing relationships in the school and a more socially just dispensation for all involved.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research?

Limited risks are foreseen for participants in this study. The risks in this study that you might experience are stress due to limited time in your schedule to participate in the study. To address these risks, the researcher will plan the research in such a way that will ensure that participants' schedules are considered and respected.

You may also feel overwhelmed by the expectations set about support for learners with special needs. We will therefore also provide information in advance about the nature of the study which will help you to decide on participation or non-participation.

However, considering the current situation, we believe that the benefits of your involvement will outweigh the risks as by participating you will be instrumental in the co-construction of a more enabling space for yourself, your colleagues, the learners and the parents.

What will happen in the unlikely event of some form of discomfort occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

Should you need further discussions after the work session due to what has been said or done either by one of the researchers or by another participant, you should feel free to immediately notify the researcher, the supervisor or the principal of your school. A meeting will then be arranged to discuss

our discomfort and work towards a solution. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of such a meeting you will be free to withdraw from the research process without any consequences regarding your position in the school.

Who will have access to the data?

Since the research is conducted in the school system we can only ensure partial anonymity, since people will know that you are involved in the research process. Your anonymity will, however, be protected when the data is transcribed by adding a code to your name to ensure that there is no connection between your identity and what you said. This code will also be used when feedback is given in workshops, discussions, reports and journal articles on the research.

Confidentiality will be ensured by calling upon all members not to discuss what has been said in the meetings and workshops by whom and by not indicating any identifying data in the transcriptions and reports. A confidentiality agreement will also be signed with the person who will transcribe the data.

All the data captured digitally or electronically during the work session will be protected by a password known only to the researcher and the research assistant. Hard copies of data will be locked in a safe in the office of the researcher while the research is in progress. On completion of the research, the electronic data will be transferred to CD and stored with all hard copies in a safe at the North West University (Faculty of Education) for a period of 7 years.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

You will not be paid to take part in the study but refreshments will be served before the onset of the World Cafe. There will thus be no costs involved for you, because the research will be conducted at the schools or at a venue that is near the schools.

How will you know about the findings?

On completion of the research project, the data will be transferred to a CD. The information will be password protected. There will be a work session with all the participants with a presentation to the district officials and circuit managers involved. This will happen within three months of the completion of the study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

You can contact Prof Ansie Kitching at 0828232011 or at akitching@uwc.ac.za if you have any further queries or encounter any problems. You can also contact the Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Erna Conradie at 018 299 4780 if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher. You will receive a copy of this information and the consent form for your records.

Declaration of participant

I,, confirm that I will participate in the research titled:

Facilitating support for learners with special needs by optimising the functioning of School-Based Support Teams. / Die fasilitering van ondersteuning vir leerders met speisiale behoeftes deur die optimalisering van die Skool Gebaseerde Ondersteunings Span.

I confirm that

- I have read the information, consent form, and understand what my responsibilities in the research process is.
- I had an opportunity to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that participating in this study is voluntary and that I am not forced to participate
- I may choose to withdraw from the research study and there will be no consequences
- The researcher may ask me to withdraw from the study when the researcher finds it not in my best interest or if I am not following the correct research procedures.

Signed (at) _____ on (date) ____/____/20____

**Signature of participant
Researcher**

Mediator

ADDENDUM D: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DATA GATHERING – PHASE 1

VRAELYS: NAVORSING SONJA BEZUIDENHOUT NWU

**TEMA: OPTIMALISERING VAN SKOOL-GEBASEERDE
ONDERSTEUNINGSPANNE**

Biografiese gegewens

Naam van deelnemer: _____

Naam van skool: _____

Graad waarin u onderrig ? _____

Hoe lank is u reeds in die onderwys? _____

Hoe lank is u onderwyser by hierdie betrokke skool? _____

Is u 'n lid van die SGOS span in u skool? _____

Indien wel, hoe lank is u reeds 'n lid van die SGOS span? _____

Wat is u rol in die SGOS span?

Baie dankie vir u bereidwilligheid om die vraelys te voltooi

- ✓ Voltooi asseblief die vrae op die volgende bladsy op aparte bladsye
- ✓ Kram die bladsye vas aan die vraelys.
- ✓ Na voltooiing, plaas asseblief die vraelys terug in die koevert, verseël dit en oorhandig aan die SGOS voorsitter vir veilige bewaring totdat dit deur die supervisor afgehaal word.

Alle onderwysers voltooi asseblief vraag 1 tot 4

1. Hoe verstaan u die funksie van die SGOS span in u skool?
2. Hoe word u huidiglik deur die SGOS span ondersteun t.o.v. hulpverlening aan leerders met probleme in jou klaskamer?
3. Is hierdie ondersteuning volgens u, voldoende en volhoubaar (m.a.w help dit jou as onderwyser en help dit die leerders wat oorgaan na die volgende graad).
Motiveer asb u antwoord.
4. Wat sou u voorstel vir verbetering of optimalisering van die funksionering van die SGOS span?

Indien u 'n lid is van die SGOS span, voltooi asseblief ook die onderstaande vrae:

5. Hoe ervaar u, u betrokkenheid by die SGOS span? Watter rol speel u m.b.t ouers, onderwysers en leerders?
6. Wat ervaar u as die grootste uitdaging wat u as span moet oorkom sodat julle meer doeltreffend kan funksioneer?

VRAELYS: NAVORSING SONJA BEZUIDENHOUT MED STUDENT NWU
QUESTIONNAIRE: RESEARCH SONJA BEZUIDENHOUT MED STUDENT NWU

TITEL VAN STUDIE: OPTIMALISERING VAN SKOOL-GEBASEERDE
ONDERSTEUNING

THEME: OPTIMIZING THE FUNCTIONING OF THE SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT
TEAM

Thank you for participating in this study. The aim of the questionnaire is 1) to collect information regarding the current functioning of the SBST in your school and 2) to collect information on the improvement of the structure and optimising of the SBST.

Baie dankie dat jy bereid is om deel te neem. Die doel van die vraelys is om 1) inligting in te samel oor die huidige funksionering van die SGOS span in jou skool 2) te bepaal hoe die werksaamhede van die span verbeter kan word om die ondersteuningsfunksie te optimaliseer.

Biografiese gegewens/ Biographical information

Naam van deelnemer/ Name of participant	Naam van skool/ Name of school
Grade wat jy onderrig / Grades you are teaching	
Aantal jare in die onderwys?/ Number of years in teaching	
Hoe lank is u onderwyser by hierdie betrokke skool?/ How long have you been teaching at your current school?	
Was u voorheen lid van die SGOS span? / Were you previously a member of the SBST?	
Is u tans 'n lid van die SGOS span in u skool?/ Are you currently a member of the SBST?	
Indien wel, hoe lank is u reeds 'n lid van die SGOS span?/ If Yes, how long have you been a member of the SBST?	

VRAELYS / QUESTIONS

Beantwoord asseblief die vrae hieronder deur die antwoorde vir elke vraag in te tik. Stuur asseblief die voltooide vraelys per epos terug aan: maraissonskyn@gmail.com

Indien jy verkies om die antwoorde uit te skryf doen dit asseblief op 'n aparte bladsy. Plaas daarna asseblief die dokument in die koevert wat verskaf is. Verseël die koevert en gee aan SGOS voorsitter vir veilige bewaring totdat dit deur die supervisor afgehaal word.

Please answer the questions by typing the answers below each question and send the completed questionnaire to: maraissonskyn@gmail.com

If you prefer to write out the answers do so on a separate page (s). Place the document in a sealed envelope and hand it to your chairperson who keep it safe until it is collected by the supervisor.

VRAAG 1: Verduidelik kortliks hoe jy die doel en funksie van die SIAS beleid verstaan?

QUESTION 1: Briefly describe your understanding of the purpose and function of the SIAS policy?

VRAAG 2: Wat is u mening oor die leerderprofiel en hoe gebruik jy dit?

QUESTION 2: What is your opinion about the learner profile and how do you use it?

VRAAG 3: Verduidelik kortliks hoe jy die doel en funksie van die SGOS verstaan?

QUESTION 3: Describe how you understand the function and purpose of the SBST?

VRAAG 4: Beantwoord asseblief die volgende vrae met betrekking tot jou ervaring van die funksionering van die SGOS in die skool waar jy werksaam is:

QUESTION 4: Please answer the following questions regarding your own experience of the functioning of the SBST in your school.

4.1 Samestelling van die Span / Composition of the SBST

- 4.1.1 Beskryf die samestelling van die huidige SGOS in jou skool (maw wie is tans lede van die SGOS)/ Describe the composition of the SBST in your school.
- 4.1.2 Hoe word bepaal wie lede moet wees van die SGOS / Who decides who should be part of the SBST?
- 4.1.3 Wat sou jy verander met betrekking tot die samestelling van die span? / What changes would you make regarding the composition of the SBST?

4.2 Identifisering en verwysing van leerders / Identification and referral of learners

- 4.2.1 Hoe word jy deur die span ondersteun om leerders wat ondersteuning nodig het te identifiseer? / How are you supported by the SBST to identify learners who experience barriers to learning?
- 4.2.2 Hoe proses die SGOS span verwysings vanaf onderwysers en hoe lank neem dit om terugvoer te ontvang? / How does the SBST process referrals from teachers and how long does it take to receive feedback?
- 4.2.3 Wat sal jy verander met betrekking tot die identifisering en verwysing van leerders? / What will you change regarding the identification of learners with barriers?

4.3 Ondersteuning deur die span / Support by the team

- 4.3.1 Hoe ondersteun die span leerders wat uitdagings ervaar? / How does the SBST support learners with barriers?
- 4.3.2 Hoe ondersteun die span onderwysers om die leerders by te staan? / How does the SBST support teachers to assist learners with barriers?
- 4.3.3. Hoe word ouers betrek by die hulpverleningsproses? / In what ways are the parents involved in the supportprocess?
- 4.3.4 Hoe en na wie word leerders verwys wat dringende professionele hulp

nodig het/ How and to whom are learners who needs urgent professional support are referred to?

4.3.5 Hoe reageer die span op probleme wat algemeen voorkom, bv afwesigheid / How does the team respond to everyday problems for example, absence?

4.3.6 Watter veranderinge sal jy aanbeveel ter verbetering van die ondersteunings funksie van die SGOS span in jou skool? / What changes would you suggest to the support provided by the SBST in your school?

VRAAG 5: Beskryf asseblief kortliks 'n ervaring van suksesvolle hulpverlening deur die SGOS span met verwysing na die probleem wat die leerder ervaar het, die soort intervensies, die volhoubaarheid van die intervensies asook die wyse waarop die personeel, ouers, die leerder self en ander hulpbronne by die ondersteuningsproses betrek en lig toe met 'n voorbeeld.

QUESTION 5: Shortly describe a situation where support has been provided to learners with barriers. What problem did the learner experience and what support were provide to the learner? Where the support sustainable? In what ways were the teachers, parents, learners and other resources involved in the support given? Please provide an example.

ADDENDUM E: EXAMPLE OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Participant: **Ons kla nie, hoe gaan dit daar?**

Sonja: Dit gaan goed dankie, Hoe gaan dit met die skool?

Participant: **Ag maar net besig, besig, ons is nou al taamlik aan die gang al . am, die kinders het al hulle boeke gekry, en alles en ons is al weer hard besig met die leerproses, en die opvoedingstaak en so aan, so ons gaan oraait aan.**

Sonja: Ag, dit is wonderlik,

Participant: **Die kinders kom in groepe skool toe as gevolg van Covid, so ons sien ons het die alternatiewe skooldae wat ons volg so, so, die kinders kom nou elke 2de dag kom hulle skool toe ja.**

Sonja: Ek is net bly dat die kinders weer skool toe kan kom.

Participant: **Ja, ja,ja dit is darem iets waaroor 'n mens kan bly wees en hulle moenie by die huis sit en niks doen nie en ook niks leer nie, nee,**

Sonja: Hulle kan so vinnig in 'n roetine kom en in 'n gewoonte val .

Participant: **Daarsy, daarsy ja. Gelukkig is ons kinders nou al soort van meer in die roetine in van skool gaan en so aan so ons is goed op dreef, ja.**

Sonja: Ag, dit is wonderlik. Ek wil net vir jou sê vandag Baie baie dankie dat ek 'n bietjie van jou tyd kan afknyp om my vragies te antwoord. Ek het die vorige vraelyste het ek ontleed en daaruit het ek natuurlik, am, vrae opgestel wat ek graag wil hê en ek wil graag jou opinie hoor oor sekere vrae. So as dit reg is met jou kan ons maar wegval met dit?

Participant: **Ja, ons kan begin.**

Sonja: Ok, 100 %., my eerste vraag aan jou is, ahm, onderwysers gebruik die woorde ondersteuning en uitvalle in terme van gestremdhede en leergestremdhede, wanneer hulle beskryf wat die werk van die SGOS span is. Sou jy sê jy ervaar dieselfde in jou skool en waarom sou jy dit sê jy ervaar dit of jy ervaar dit nie?

Participant: **Ja, Sonja ek ervaar dit ook so. Hier by ons skool is grootliks maar op kinders wat ernstige leerprobleme het en daarvolgens gee ons ondersteuning so dit gaan basies daarop uit dat elke onderwyser nou optel met sy interaksie met die kind deur middel van assessering en daaglikse onderrig klastoetsies en so aan. Indien ons daar optel dat die kind bietjie sukkel met lees of met leerprobleme dan fokus ons basies daarop ja.**

Sonja: Ok en jy sê nou deur middel van assesserings wat julle gebruik kan julle ook sien of die kind 'n probleem het, ek wil net hoor, tel julle dit dadelik op, soos skool het nou begin byvoorbeeld, wanneer sal julle begin optel as 'n kind 'n probleem het?

Participant: **Ja kyk as ons nou spesifiek na my geval kyk, ek het nou in die paar dae wat ek nou my leerders gesien het, het ek baie leeswerk met hulle gedoen , so ek kon onmiddellik optel watter kinders sukkel so bietjie met leesprobleme wat vir my nou weer dwing om vinnig op te tree en te probeer ondersteuning gee om te kyk of ek dit kan uit die weg ruim, want gewoonlik is dit mos so wanneer 'n kind 'n lees probleem het, dan automaties gaan dit oor na ander leerprobleme ook, veral in ander leerareas en so aan en dit is maar basies wat ons so wat nou van my verwag word is ek moet nou die probleme neer pen en dit gaan oorlê aan die SBST sodat ons daarvolgens 'n ondersteuningsprogrammetjie kan uitwerk. .**

Sonja: Dit is wonderlik want dan dit beteken dit is vroeë intervensie wat plaasvind , ne?

Participant: Dit is reg, ja, daarsy, daarsy.

Sonja: Dit is wonderlik, Uit my analise kom vragie 2 wat ek het en ek wil vra wanneer dit kom by die ondersteuning wat die SGOS span aanbied vir personeel en onderwysers gee hulle sekere planne en sekere voorstelle aan die onderwyser. Hoe dink jy kan daar verseker word dat al hierdie hupverlening wat die onderwysers ontvang in terme van raad wat hulle ontvang van die SGOS span deurgevoer word sodat die leerders daarby kan baat? .

Participant: Ja, Sonja ek sou sê in so geval is dit nodig om gereeld bymekaar te kom sodat daar gereelde terugvoer , die plan wat ons het hier by ons skool is dat ons self elke tweede week vergader sodat daar nie daardie proses tussen in nie te lank uitgerek word nie. En die koördineerder moet dan seker maak dat daardie vergaderings wel plaasvind en die onderwyser moet ook dan intervensie asook die leerder se werk kom voorlê sodat ons kan sien daar word wel gewerk met die leerder op die probleem wat die leerder het. En dat ons ook kan sien al hierdie werk of daar enigsins enige vordering is en of die onderwyser enige hulp verder nodig het. Ek sou sê dit is belangrik dat daar gereelde terugvoering deur die opvoeders aan die SBST is sodat daar ‘n voortdurend van ek wil sê ‘n oog gehou word op dit wat gebeur In die klas want, as ons dit nou net aan die onderwyser gaan oorlaat om nou aan te gaan op die einde van die dag mag dit wees dat daar niks gebeur nie. So die span speel regtig’n baie groot rol daarin om te verseker dat daar gereelde kontak tussen die span en die onderwyser is en op die manier kan ons nou opvolg en na gaan hoe die proses vorder.

Sonja: Dit is wonderlik, elke twee weke, dit is baie goed. Dit hou die..

Participant: Ja, Dit is wat ons doen ja, ons vergader elke twee weke in die verskillende fases en soos ek vir u sê die onderwysers moet dan die bewyse van intervensies en dan ook 'n bewys van die adviese en raad van die span verleen het te wys dit was toegepas en hoe het die leerder daarin gevorder.

Sonja: Ja, Ek wil nou half die woord dwing gebruik, ek wil nie se dwing nie , dwing is bietjie 'n sterk woord maar 'n mens dwing die onderwysers eintlik om dit deur te voer as ek dit so kan sê. Ek wil nie half die woord dwing gebruik nie , want almal is maar nou nie uitgeknipt vir hulpverlening en te gretig om hierdie planne deur te voer nie, maar dit is wonderlik.

Participant: Ja, ja dit is so kyk die probleem wat 'n mens somtyds met onderwyser het, onderwyser sê dit is te veel administrasie , te veel werk en so aan en later dan raak hulle nalatig soort van, die uiteinde van die saak is ons wil graag die kinders help , dit die belangrike ding en die hulp moet van so aard wees dat dit tot voordeel van die kind is en 'n mens kan dit, en soos jy sê 'n mens moet soms die woordjie dwing gebruik sodat op die einde van die dag gaan dit oor die kind moet voordeel uit die hele proses kan trek.

Sonja: Ja, dit is wonderlik. My volgende vraag is die funksionering van meeste SGOS spanne is baie goed maar meeste onderwysers ervaar bekommernis oor die tyd wat dit neem om terugvoer te ontvang. Vanaf die SGOS span in verband met sekere leerders. Watter uitdagings dink jy staan die SGOS span huidiglik in die gesig as dit kom by volhoubare en waardige terugvoer.

Participant: Ek wil basies weer my vorige antwoord gebruik, want soms word daar nie by die beplande terugvoering vergaderings gehou nie en dit veroorsaak dat die interaksies tussen die SGOS span en die onderwysers gaan later agteruit. En soos ek sê dat talle onderwysers voel ook soms of dit te veel papierwerk en administrasie 'n groot hindernis is en ook baie belangrike ding is die skole kry nie altyd voldoende ondersteuning van die department nie en hulle gaan ook maar aan soos wat hulle voel dit is reg en baie keer maak dit nogal dat jy voel jy voer 'n soort van geveg wat jy alleen veg en later dan verloor jy stoom . en jy begin later voel maar hoekom doen ek dit? En vir wie doen ek dit? Want daar is nie voldoende ondersteuning nie en in die geval speel die koördineerder van die span nogals 'n baie belangrike rol. Hy moet seker maak dat die span moet optimaal funksioneer en dan moet hy ook saam met die span by die onderwysers die gevoel skep dat die werk wat die onderwyser doen dat dit wel 'n doel dien en dat dit waardeur word en ook dat dit tot voordeel van die kind maar ook tot voordeel van die skool is, maar dit is belangrik soos ek die die interaksie tussen die span en department en die onderwyser moet van so aarde wees dat vir almal motiveer om voort te gaan met die aksie.

Sonja: Ja, Ja, so jou voorloper is eintlik 'n persoon wat baie sterk is in terme van leierskap wat die leiding kan vat.

Participant: Daarsy ja, dit is hy. Hy moet die ding aan die gang hou soos ek sê, dit is soos die afrigter, hy moet sy span gefokus hou. Dit is eintlik vir my baie belangrik ja.

Sonja: My laaste vraag is, am, hoe sal 'n perfekte SGOS span lyk volgens jou?

Participant: Sonja ek sal in die eerste plek sê 'n perfekte SGOS span moet bestaan uit toegewyde lede, soos wat ek by my vorige antwoord ook gesê het. Jy weet jy kan die beste expertise op jou span hê wat hulle

werk ken maar as niemand toegewyd is aan die taak nie gaan niks gebeur nie. So dit is my eerste ding. Almal wat op die span is moet toegewyd wees aan die taak wat aan ons opgelê is sodat ons dit wat van ons verwag word doen na die beste van ons vermoë. En natuurlik is dit ook belangrik dat ook omdat die probleme wat jy in die skool opset ervaar te uiteenlopend is is dit belangrik dat die span ook so uiteenlopend as moontlik kan wees sodat die meeste van die probleme ,ek wil amper sê daar moet 'n een vir elke probleem op die span wees sodat ons weet dat die probleem wat mag opduik die beste aandag sal kry en dan op die einde net die beste oplossing sal kry.

Sonja: Ja, dit is wonderlik. As alle SGOS spanne so kan wees sjoe, dink ek nie ons gaan baie probleme hê met kinders nie.

Participant: Ja, ja, en weet jy hoef ook nie eers spesialiste te hê op jou span nie, maar as jy mense het wat toegewyd is, is dit mense wat gaan nalees en navrae doen en hulle gaan die probleem ondersoek hulle gaan raad vra en so aan en op die einde van die dag word die probleem opgelos.

Sonja: Ja, en hulle positiewe gesindheid ook teenoor dit

Participant: Dit is baie belangrik, dit gaan baie help.

Sonja: Ons kan net aanhou baklei vir so iets hoor .

Participant: Ja nee dit is so , dit is so maar soos ek seê ons moet nooit ophou bakelei nie al voel dit somtyds of ons baklei ons of ons loop ons teen 'n muur vas moet ons besef alles kon doen doen ons vir ons kinders en vir hulle toekoms.

Sonja: Ja die dag wanneer ons heeltemal ophou met hierdie intervensie is die dag wat ons gaan verloor

Participant: Dit is reg so Sonja, Ek vra altyd vir my die vraag af as ek hulle versaaak na wie toe kan hulle dan gaan , vertaan jy so ek kan nie bekostig om tou op te gooi nie hy/sy het dalk nie ‘n ouer wat vir hom kan raad gee en ondersteun nie hy maak staat op die onderwyser wat elke dag voor hom sit of staan en as ek ooknog gaan tou opgooi na wie toe het hy om te gaan op die einde van die dag is hy/ of sy verlore ja.

Sonja: Dit is so groot rol wat die onderwyser speel ne, Baie groot

Participant: Presies, baie groot ja

Sonja: Ek wil vir jou vreeslik, vreeslik dankie sê vir jou tyd ek waardeer dit so baie!! As daar weer ietsietjie is waaraan ek raaklees of waaraan ek dink gaan ek met die grootste vrymoedigheid vir jou vra as dit reg is met jou.

Participant: Geen probleem nie

Sonja: Ek waardeer so baie jou tyd vandag

Participant: Nee, geen probleem nie Sonja enige tyd . goed gaan en ‘n lekker dag

Sonja: Sterkte met daardie zoom vergadering hoor.

Participant: Ok baie dankie, goed gaan hoor.

Sonja: Dankie , totsiens

ADDENDUM F: DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR

**RMC LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER
117 OOSTVALLEI VILLAGE
657 COLEY STREET
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I have proofread and edited the Master's dissertation entitled **FACILITATING SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS BY OPTIMISING THE FUNCTIONING OF SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT TEAMS** by S. Bezuidenhout.

I applied Microsoft Office Word track changes to the document and have suggested certain changes and corrections to language usage, syntax, and general style which I trust will be effected to make it adhere to the editorial principles required for examination.

Signed:



Date: 15 October 2022

Dr RV McCabe
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ADDENDUM G: TURN IT IN

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