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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**EXPLORING THE ROLE OF A SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM (SBST)
IN SUPPORTING TEACHERS AT A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Thabisile Bellinda Maphumulo**, student number, **211549772**, declare that this dissertation titled, **THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM (SBST) IN SUPPORTING TEACHERS AT A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL** is my own work. All references, citations, and borrowed ideas have been acknowledged accordingly by means of references.

This is being submitted for the Degree of Masters in Education, Professional Development and Higher Education at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, in South Africa. No parts of the present work have been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.



19 AUGUST 2019

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CT – CLASSROOM TEACHERS

CoP- COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

DBE – DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

DBST – DISTRICT BASED SUPPORT TEAM

DOE – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EWP6 – EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6

FP – FOUNDATION PHASE

FSS - FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS

IE – INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

ILST – INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT TEAM

INSET – IN-SERVICE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

IP – INTERMEDIATE PHASE

LOLT – LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

LSC – LEARNER SUPPORT COMMITTEE

NCES – NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

NCSNET/NCES – NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SPECIAL NEEDS IN EDUCATION AND
NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

NGO – NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

NSW – NEW SOUTH WALES

OECD – ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

OVC- ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

PLC – PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

QLTC – QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING CAMPAIGN

RNPE - REVISED NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

SBST – SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM

SE – SPECIAL EDUCATION

SEN – SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

SIAS – SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT

SIT – SCHOOL INTERVENTION TEAM

SMT- SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM

SNE – SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATORS

SNES – SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION SERVICES

SSRC - SPECIAL SCHOOLS AS RESOURCE CENTRES

SUT – SUPPORT TEACHERS

TSC – TEACHER SUPPORT COMMITTEE

UNESCO – UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

WSE – WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION

DEDICATION

I would like to specially dedicate my work to my all my family members, oGcogcobala and to my late parents, uManto no Bhekifa and twin brother uKhulekani.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the role of the School Based Support Team (SBST) in a rural primary school. Teachers of a selected rural primary school in the Embo area under the Pinetown District participated so that the nature and functionality of the SBST could be investigated. Furthermore, teachers' experiences in implementing Inclusive Education (IE) with the support of the SBST was examined in the study.

The Education White Paper 6 of 2001 points out that all children can learn in mainstream schools. The document contends, with the assistance of appropriate support, learners with disabilities can learn together with their peers. This advocacy has created more responsibilities for schools and teachers. At a school level, this paper recommends the formation of a team which supports learning processes through identifying each learner's needs and addressing barriers to learning thereby promoting teaching and learning which is effective for all. There are guidelines on how the School Based Support Team (SBST) can support teachers who in turn, can willingly support learners with learning difficulties. The District Based Support Team (DBST) ensures that the implementation of IE is practiced in the classrooms by supporting the School Based Support Team (SBST).

This study explored the experiences and perceptions of seven members of one rural school's School Based Support Team (SBST). The participants included members of the school's management team and three classroom teachers (who represented the three phases) in this chosen public school. For the purpose of the study, a qualitative study design was used to understand teachers' experiences. The case study methodology was designed because it complemented the nature of this study as it aimed at understanding a single case within its natural setting. The study deliberated in depth on the situation of the teachers at their school, using interviews to aid data collection, this is typical of case-study research.

The data collected were analysed and categorised according to themes. The participants of the study expressed their successes along with challenges in the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) with the support they received from the School Based Support Team (SBST). The highlighted successes included the collaboration amongst School Based Support Team (SBST), School Management Team (SMT), classroom teachers and external stakeholders as sister departments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Challenges included lack of resources, minimal parental involvement, unavailable or no specified time allocated for support

and trial-and-error programmes due to insufficient remedial knowledge and skills. The District Based Support Team (DBST) as a structure appeared to have little impact as it was not following up on referrals or addressing problems of identified learners for additional support and appropriate placements. Furthermore, teachers expressed their dismay regarding contextual factors because of the school being situated in a rural area.

The study concluded that the School Based Support Team can play a substantial role in supporting teachers to implement Inclusive Education in a rural primary school effectively despite challenges they encounter.

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CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The topic of this study is the role of a School Based Support Team (SBST) in supporting teachers in a rural primary school. A case study methodology was employed to explore the nature of support School Based Support Team members provided to classroom teachers and their experiences in teaching learners with barriers to learning. This chapter provides the background to Inclusive Education (IE) which aims to increase better access to education by providing support to teachers at school level. The chapter also gives the motivation and rationale for the study. The purpose and the aims are presented in questions that guided the study thus providing an overview of the study. The research methodology used for the study is also briefly outlined in the chapter.

1.2 Focus and purpose of the study

The study focused on the role and nature of support provided by the SBST and the narratives of lived experiences of teachers who have learners experiencing barriers to learning in their respective classrooms at the selected rural primary school. The study is premised on the notion that inclusive schools (also referred to as ‘inclusive learning communities’) are places where individual learning and shared learning are promoted and seen as necessary for change; where people are continually learning how to learn and live together (Swart & Pettipher 2005). Furthermore, in Inclusive Educational contexts, the roles of SBST team members are defined within collaborative support structures and the utilization and acknowledgement of expertise. In light of the above, this study seeks to understand the role and how the support provisions of the SBST impacts on the scheduled implementation of Inclusive Education in this rural school context.

1.3 Rationale of the study

Vithal and Jansen (2004), cited in Maree (2007, p. 28), state that the rationale serves as a statement of how the researcher developed interest in the particular topic and exactly why the researcher believes the research is worthy of conducting. Proponents of inclusive education, including, Stofile and Green (2007, p. 52-64) and Swart and Pettipher (2007, p. 101-120) are of the view that most teachers are in favour of inclusion in principle but have uncertainties concerning its implementation. They further argue that there is limited research conducted on teachers' understanding of the roles and nature of support provisions from the SBSTs, generally, and specifically in rural school settings. The motivation for and interest in conducting this study is informed by my observations as an educator that suggest that although the SBST has been established, effective and efficient inclusionary implementation practices are limited, despite the diverse population of learners at the school. This study will provide me, as an educator, a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SBST as experienced in a rural school where I teach.

The Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) on inclusive education has been in place for nearly a decade now in South Africa. The Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) implements the ideologies of inclusion in line with the global viewpoints. While great strides have been taken in making schools inclusive, the research on implementation of this policy is largely localized to urban settings and in schools that cater for special needs learners. Public schools, especially in rural contexts have been under researched on inclusive education. The challenges regarding rural education have been well established in the literature (Ramrathan & Ngubane, 2013), but a focus on Inclusive Education on such contexts is very limited; for example, Moletsane (2012) writes about an initiative, using participatory visual methods within the context of HIV/AIDS, within rural schools. This paper suggests that initiatives are being made to facilitate inclusive education within rural schools, but the experience of teachers within an inclusive education framework in rural schools is lacking, hence this study contributes to this discourse on inclusive education by exploring the challenges teachers face and the nature of support that they receive to enable them to implement inclusive education.

In my engagements with teachers, I have observed that teachers experience challenges in dealing with learners who are experiencing diverse barriers to learning in their classrooms. They struggle

with understanding and implementing the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) to learners, as required by the Inclusion Policy. Teachers' frustrations are further exacerbated by limited training, insufficient resources and high expectations from senior officials, all of which threaten effective implementation of IE. Undoubtedly, professional development, adequate resource provision, effective monitoring and support will enable teachers to respond better to what is required of them for the Inclusion Policy. Putman & Borko (2000 p. 6) posit that one approach to staff development is to ground teachers' learning experiences in their own practice by conducting activities at school sites.

While teacher support and development have been widely studied, there is limited literature and studies that have exclusively focused on inclusivity in rural primary schools, and in particular, focusing on the Embo region in KwaZuluNatal, thus, this study will make an academic contribution in this field of study as it explores the role, capacity and support offered to rural primary school teachers. According to Blenkin, Edwards and Kelly (1992), programmes and curriculum reviews are crucial in order to respond to societal changes and that can benefit educational processes. Blenkin et al. (1992) recommend that beneficiaries and role players of a programme are an important resource. They provide significant information as role players of an educational programme that is now considered important. This study's approach and belief therefore is that, in-service teachers are crucial respondents and are in a better position to comment on the role and functionality of the SBST, with special reference to a rural primary school.

Conducting this study was intended to afford me better insight into the role and support of the SBST to teachers based on the narrated lived experiences of these teachers in their daily classroom interactions with learners experiencing barriers to learning in a rural school context.

1.4 Purpose and objectives of the study

Purpose of the study

The exploratory nature of this study aimed at understanding the role of the SBST and the nature of support teachers received for their professional development in accommodating and addressing the experienced learning barriers in classrooms of the selected rural school. The purpose,

therefore, of this study was to explore the nature and functioning of SBST in a rural school with a view to establishing and understanding the nature of support provided to teachers for inclusive education in a rural school.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the composition of the SBST and explore their roles in supporting teachers in a rural primary school.
- To determine the lived experiences of teachers who have learners experiencing barriers to learning in their respective classrooms.
- To understand how the SBST provide support to classroom teachers and how classroom teachers understand the support they receive in order to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms.

1.5 Research questions that this study sought to ask

Maxwell (2005, p.67) points out that research questions ‘are questions that you propose to answer over data collection methods. Such questions guide all other successive tasks in the research process.’ I intend to address the topic by answering the following key research questions:

- How are SBSTs constituted in a rural primary school and what do they understand about their role in providing support to teachers?
- What support do teachers need when teaching within an inclusive education framework in a rural primary school?
- What are the lived experiences of teachers who have learners experiencing barriers to learning in their respective classrooms within a rural school?
- What is the nature of support provided by the SBST in facilitating inclusive education within a rural school?

1.6 Location of the study

The study was located in the rural Embo area of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, Molweni Ward in the Pinetown District. The composition of the learner population comprised of

grade 1 to grade 7 learners and twenty-two teachers, five of whom are School Management Team; being the principal, deputy principal and three departmental heads. All learners were from the area, mostly with parents who were either domestic workers or who were unemployed with some receiving the government social grants. The school has a daily nutritional programme providing healthy meals to all learners.

1.7 Contextualizing the study

In South Africa, fundamental changes have been made to restructure the fragmented, exclusionary, unequal and an authoritative education system to a democratic, inclusive system. This new system emphasizes the pedagogy of inclusion as one of the crucial fundamental principles enshrined in the cornerstone of democracy, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa's Bill of Rights, and principles which entrench the rights for all people in South Africa. Fundamental education transformation thus marked the inception of the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) on Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001). The EWP6 (DoE, 2001) outlines a system of education support for an inclusive education system that depends firstly, on effective management, policy, planning and monitoring capacity within the national Department of Education and the nine provincial departments of education. The South African education system took the policy from planned intents to effective realism. The two key education structures, which are the District-Based Support Team (DBST) and the former structure known as the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST), now known as the School-Based Support Team (SBST), were created. The DBST structure comprises staff officials which is based in the district offices as well as those officials which are from Special School Resource Centres (SSRCs). Resource centres have been set up in different circuits within the districts and they operate within certain school premises. Their primary function is to steer the Inclusive Education strategy, reconceptualization and reform of education support services offered to schools across the district as envisaged by Barret, Cowen, Toma and Troske (2015).

Makoelle (2014); Donohue and Bornman (2014) observe that the Inclusive Education policy laid foundations for learners with learning difficulties and barriers to learning to attend normal schooling in an attempt to bring equity of learning opportunities for all learners. Accordingly, teachers are at the centre of this radical transformation as key role players to lead reform efforts.

In addition, for these fundamental changes to be realized, a change in roles and responsibilities of teachers had to be expanded and enriched for their professional development to meet the needs of the diverse learner population in their respective classrooms.

Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016) contended that the efforts to restructure schools to accommodate the diverse learner needs implies a paradigm shift from a process of learning and teaching with embedded assumptions, standards customs and school practices, encouraging a present circumstance to one that now endorses reform, commitment to change in addition planning for change, providing support and maintaining transformation. In a study by Das and Hettiarachchi (2014) they argue that such transformation efforts in the restructuring and recapturing of teachers and schools be seen as a radical and thorough process of change. Rogers-Adkinson and Fridley (2016), however caution that teacher education programmes should be informed by current research on variables that are key to the successful inclusion of students with diverse learning needs in mainstream classroom settings. Srivastava, de Boer and Pijl (2017) concur with this notion and further stress that high excellence in teacher education programs are of critical importance into inclusive school communities and that pre-and in-service education programs are an integral part of the current exertions to adapt schools to be social communities.

Challenges to the development of inclusive teacher education have, however negatively impacted on the implementation of inclusive education. Learners with diverse learning needs have been viewed as two extremes within the mainstream school settings. Das and Hettiarachchi, (2014) observe that the idea of special education teachers, with an added qualification, feeds into the understanding that special education requires expertise entirely different from mainstream teachers. In the past some teachers learnt that certain learners with special needs could only be taught using special material and special teacher skills and in special segregated settings. The practice of special needs referral thus relieved the mainstream teachers of the responsibility for the needs of diverse learners, especially those with disabilities. In this sense, mainstream schools as organizations experienced no pressure to change in order to accommodate learners with diverse learning needs according to Azorín-Abellán (2018).

Bethere, Neimane, & Usca, (2016) further maintain that management in rigid and hierarchical institutions often act as an exclusionary pressure, discouraging teachers and other role players from participating in decision making and collaborative ways of learning and drawing on existing skills,

knowledge and their own creativity thus posing a serious threat to the fostering of inclusive school communities. Teachers constantly experience imposed change in education reform initiatives and departmental mandates that result in superficial reforms at best, but more frequently, in passive resistance and alienation (Rogers-Adkinson & Fridley, 2016). Monje (2017) writes about teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and says that mainstream teachers have inadequate knowledge and skills to address learner diversity appropriately. This indicates a nonexistence of educational efforts to teacher support networks and availability of adequate resources for ensuring quality education for all learners. Teachers seem to believe that current pre- and in-service teacher education programmes do not prepare them adequately for the realities of inclusive classrooms, according to Messiou, Ainscow, Echeita, Goldrick, Hope, Paes, and Vitorino (2016).

A study conducted by Murungi (2015), highlighted the failure of policy makers to consider adequately teachers' objectivity and their classroom realities when restructuring an education system. She argues that the literature focuses increasingly on the extent to which the numerous educational reforms often fail to achieve their goals because prior to the implementation of the process of change they rarely consider the importance of teachers having to change their learned skills, viewing platforms, principles and conceptions of education, and thereby creating doubts about their sense of competence and affecting their self-concepts.

Hardy and Woodcock (2015) suggest that teachers have to be supported to make a shift to the socio-contextual or socio-ecological model of understanding issues related to the accommodation of differences, diversity and disability and need to understand the social construction of lived experiences, identities and behaviour. Collaboration is one of the essential features of inclusive school communities which should be consciously cultivated in schools (Antinluoma, Ilomaki and Lahti-Nuutila, 2018). It binds those concerned by countering isolation through fostering community and a sense of belonging and participation among all role players within an inclusive school community.

To ensure collaboration, skills need to be developed by classroom teachers which are in relation to problem-solving, dealing with differences, interpersonal communication and in dealing with themselves with regard to their time management, according to Das et al, (2014). In inclusive settings, teachers need to examine their own teaching and learners' learning through reflection and

inquiry. Meltz (2014) believes that the development of open-mindedness, flexibility, creativity, responsibility and the willingness of teachers to conduct their practice is important.

As a response to the reconstruction and education reform initiatives and challenges experienced by learners with learning barriers, Inclusive Education and implementation thereof was mandated in South Africa. Schools as sites of these education initiatives are expected to be the driving force towards the realization of these initiatives. Furthermore, schools comprise a diverse learner population and thus their education should be geared towards addressing their different needs and learning styles. The Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) on Inclusive Education provides a platform for the implementation of Inclusive Education in schools and the establishment of School Based Support Teams and the District Based Support Teams. Johnson (1998) as cited in Engelbrecht and Green (2009), observes that the SBST's role is to identify the site-specific learner, teacher and institutional needs and co-ordinate efforts within the individual schools to be addressed appropriately.

The SBST focus is on empowering teachers to develop preventive and promotive strategies, and on building skills to address learners specific difficulties (Makoelle, 2014). Engelbrecht and Green (2009, p.163) point out that the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST) as formerly known, now acknowledges that the SBST is not only at schools to solve the problem of a particular teacher, or to facilitate referral elsewhere, but the SBST's primary functions at schools are to facilitate and collaborate the activities of inclusivity in helping teachers develop their own classroom solutions, while District Based Support Teams (DBSTs), which are based at the district offices, are central to service delivery in the districts for their allocated schools in a circuit. The main function of the DBST officials and their responsibilities is to capacity building in schools and ensure that educational institutions support learners in recognizing and addressing their learning difficulties, and by doing a range of learning needs of learners are accommodated. Furthermore, the DBST is there to build capacity in schools so that Institutional Level Teams/ SBST develop the knowledge, skills and self-confidence to address a range of concerns their teachers encounter in their constituencies (Johnson, 1998). According to The Education White Paper 6 (EWP6, 2001, p.3) '[a] one of the key responsibilities of the District Support Teams to schools will be to provide curriculum, assessment and instructional support'.

At the heart of effective functioning of the District Based Support Team and School-Based Support Teams lies collaboration. Collaboration is the new kind of professionalism or a ‘community of practice’ that connects individual teachers with others in their school community (Day 2004; Hargreaves & Fullan 1998, p. 133; Harris & Muijs 2005.p.17).

Fullan (1993, p. 92) defines the term collaboration ‘as a process where there is shared creation: this view two or more individuals with a shared understanding as well as with complementary skills to interact with the purpose of creating something that had not previously possessed or could have come to on their own.’ The development of inclusive school communities therefore requires a shift from certain premises like exclusion, individualism and isolation to an importance on belongingness, cooperation and joint support, which also form the basis of association and partnership (Meltz, 2014).

The foundations of collaborative relationships therefore are help, support, trust, openness and a commitment to valuing people as individuals as well as the groups in which they work (Govender, Motala & Nzima 2015). Concentrating on the South African background, the EWP6 (Department of Education, 2001) supports the notion of collaboration by recommending a community-based approach to learner support. However, research has revealed that defining roles of the team members within a collaborative support team in inclusive educational contexts, and the utilization and acknowledgement of the expertise that exist, present a number of challenges in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2004; Muthukrishna & Baez 2002). Furthermore, in spite of the awareness that collaboration between various role players is essential for effective implementation of inclusive education, effective collaboration strategies are not in place (Livingston, 2016). Parental involvement and their acknowledgement in a collaborative team is essential. However, results of an in-depth analysis of parents’ experiences of the inclusion of their children with disabilities into mainstream education (Rodriguez & Elbaum, 2014) indicate that collaboration between different role players is enhanced or impeded by different perspectives on the rights of parents and their children, and that interactions with parents need to go beyond superficial, which is highly prescriptive notions of involvement (Messiou, & Ainscow, 2015).

1.8 Significance of the study

Since all schools are required to have SBSTs, this study should be significant for school-based policy makers, school-based support teams, teachers and leaders of school education. The policy makers will be encouraged to take cognizance of the contextual realities of schools, especially the variations between rural schools and urban schools where the support and infrastructure are vastly different, when making policy decisions and drawing up policies.

1.9 Theoretical framework

This study adopts both a theoretical and a conceptual framework. A theoretical framework facilitates the dialogue between appropriate literature and a research study. It leads to a specific conceptual framework which can also be described as an alignment of the key concepts of the study (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smith, 2004 p. 26). This study will adopt Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) as its theoretical framework. Wenger's communities of practice, CoP, focuses on a dedicated group of people, with a collective interest, who meet on a regular basis to learn and improve something (Lave & Wenger, 1991). CoP's usually consist of a group of people who find themselves having a shared area of interest or a shared concern. Engagement with this theoretical framework will be dealt with in the next chapter.

1.10 Conceptual framework

Inclusion in education is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers to learning, development and participation in inclusive learning communities (Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2014). Support is the cornerstone of successful inclusive education. Inclusive schools and classrooms focus on how to operate classrooms and schools as supportive and caring communities in which a sense of community is fostered – a sense that everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by all members of the school community (Landsberg, Kruger & Swart 2011, p. 21).

Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit, & Van Deventer (2016) observe that the basic principle of inclusive learning communities is that all learners, belong in schools where the concepts of inclusion,

community, collaboration, democracy and diversity are embodied in the school's philosophy and organizational system irrespective of the challenges individual learners face. Furthermore, these authors contend that rethinking should not be underestimated as one's professional identity involves a threat as well as a challenge and the level of support necessary. Administrator's, education officials and the parent community are fully informed about the changes in role and accept their part in a collaborative process, is equally important as they are the other helping professionals in schools. Commitment to a different professional role does not immediately empower teachers with skills to carry out the new role successfully (Green & Engelbrecht 2009, p. 7). It is emphasized that if teachers in the mainstream and in special schools, want to implement inclusion within their classrooms they need to know how to consult, instruct, and how to collaborate and operate independently (Ainscow, 2015). The conceptualization of support in schools implies that all learners may require additional support at some other times and thus such participation and learning will remove barriers since changing contexts may affect learning in different ways at different times (Green & Engelbrecht, 2009). Equally important is the collaboration which is a strategy of support for inclusive education and according to Artiles and Kozleski (2007) is at the core of inclusive school community.

Friend and Cook (2009, p. 5) define collaboration as 'a style of direct interaction between the least co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work towards a common goal.' The EWP6 (Department of Education, 2001) outlines a system of education support for an inclusion education system that depends, firstly, on effective management, policy, planning and monitoring capacity within the national Department of Basic Education and the nine provincial departments of basic education. Furthermore, the EWP6 (DoE, 2001) regarding provision of care and additional support programmes offers policy directives and services for all learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development. The policy promotes that support should be infused at all levels of educational organizations, namely, classrooms, schools, districts and provincial offices. The structure of the range of support provision to address issues within schools was developed in line with the framework of support provision outlined in the EWP6 (DoE, 2001) as follows:

- The Low level of offered support covers:
 - (i) general life skills programmes and curriculum-based activities that address the development of self, social issues, health issues and relationships, with the focus on developing knowledge, skills, attributes and values that would promote healthy living and making good choices.
 - (ii) Local partnership or school-based prevention and awareness campaigns addressing social, psychological and behavioral issues.
 - (iii) School initiated and implemented programmes to address the support needs of identified learners.
- The Moderate level of offered support covers:
 - (i) Consultations by the school with specialists at circuit and district office level, local agencies, communities and other governmental departments to address support needs of learners.
 - (ii) Specialized skills development for educators on support intervention strategies to address psycho-social issues experienced by learners; for example, lay-counselling skills, strategies to manage bullying, implementation of child abuse protocol.
 - (iii) Accessing support resources and /or services from local full-service and special schools as resource centres to support identified learners or to address a generalized psycho-social issue experienced at school.
- The High level of offered support covers:

All direct victim support and empowerment interventions requiring:

- (i) the services of specialists such as psychologists, social workers, medical specialists, specialized facilities; for example, learner needs to be assessed or to receive a therapeutic intervention from the specialist/ a Centre/clinic.
- (ii) Collaboration with other government departments to ensure a learner's safety and protection; for example, cases of abuse, neglect, trafficking, exploitation, para-suicide.
- (iii) Intensive, localized whole-school intervention by a team of specialists from the district office, local agencies or other government departments to address a psycho-social issue, for example, issues of trauma, high prevalence of drug and substance

abuse, high incidence of teenage pregnancy and gangsterism (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2015).

The comprehensiveness of the EWP6, therefore forms the conceptual framework within which SBST activities are explored and how teachers experience such support from their SBST.

1.11 Research methodology and design

The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to address and extensively describe the role and support provisions of the SBST to classroom teachers taking into account their lived experiences with learners experiencing barriers to learning from their own perspectives. Berg (2003, p. 5) observes that a qualitative research approach helps the researcher to understand and explain the meaning of phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) further contend that a qualitative research approach ‘is a research approach that focuses on natural occurring phenomenon with a view to illuminating, understanding and explaining the existence of such a phenomenon in its natural environment.

The case study design was chosen to conduct this study in a single-school setting. The case study is an in-depth study undertaken of a particular case, which can involve be a site, an individual or a policy (Green & Thurgood 2004, p. 284). Merriam (1998, p. 27) defines a case study as ‘a thing, a single entity, or a unit around which there are boundaries.’ This study is bounded in a single school context, specifically focusing on the SBST and classroom teachers who have learners experiencing barriers to learning. It excludes other teachers in the same environment. In addition, the selected school possesses a unique bounded system of operations which is influenced by its daily practices, culture, policies, ethos and realities.

The details of the research design and its methodological processes in producing the empirical evidence for this study is engaged with substantially in chapter 3 of this thesis.

1.12 Clarification of concepts

Inclusive Education: This is an aspect of the education system, which focuses on supportive educational admission for learners with a variety of learning barriers. The Inclusion policy acknowledges that learning is a capability for all children and many will require support in

mainstream schools. Pienaar and Raymond (2013) maintain that learner's strengths are developed and enabled for them to be able to participate actively and critically in the learning process. Macintyre and Deponio (2013) further explain that children with disabilities should not miss out on chances for social interaction in main stream school as the policy of inclusion state, learners attending a special school, as they may possibly get assistance academically from classrooms with their peers in mainstream schools. Moreover, Inclusive Education aims that at transforming the education system from being a segregated one to be an inclusive one (DoE, 2001). Inclusion means that all educators are responsible for the education of all learners and the curriculum must be adapted to cope with diversity, both in mainstream and specialized schools (DoE 2001, p. 16).

Inclusion is about developing education systems and inclusive community. Inclusion is further regarded as being grounded on a value that invites and celebrates differences and diversity arising from many things like for example gender, population, race, linguistic, socio-economic background, social origin and level of educational achievement and disability (Ainscow 2009; Artiles & Kolzeski 2007).

According to Booth (2003), understanding inclusion can be from the context of specific national systems and values. Likewise, Dyson (2001) further supports the view that each nation is influenced by certain standards, ideals and principles in order to have its own exclusive product of inclusion.

Mainstreaming: According to Swart & Pettipher (2007), cited in Landsberg, Kruger and Swart (2011, p.7) mainstreaming is the education equivalent of the normalization principle which proposes that people with disabilities have a right to ordinary life experiences that are the same as, or similar to those of anyone else in society.

To understand the idea of inclusion it is essential for one to trace back to the backgrounds of numerous connected relationships which amongst them include mainstreaming and integration. There is a great relationship within these terms and that is why they often viewed as identical and largely interchangeable.

Mainstream school: In the context of this study, a mainstream school is an ordinary school which provides learners with the same material and only modifies their teaching methods and assessments to cater for different learning needs. Mainstream schools join learners together, whether or not

they are with and without special educational needs. Mainstream education is focusing on the learner with particular an effort to make changes that will take place within learners themselves so that they can fit into these changed schools (DoE, 2005). Mainstream schools are also places where transformation occurs to accommodate the diverse learning abilities and needs of all learners. The purpose of transforming schools so as to be mainstream to ensure that the learning environment is as conducive and stimulating as possible for all learners, particularly to Special Educational Needs (SEN) learners (UK DoE, 2013).

Support: This involves the activities that bring together all stakeholders and resources to address the needs of the school so that the SBST is able to support the teachers efficiently (Monsen, Ewing and Kwoka, 2014). Additionally, support is the educational action which is the provision made for teachers for easier learning to take place. This support is provided by different structures at different levels, be it at national, district or at school level. Supporting teachers at a school level, however requires some collaboration and supportive engagement from important external stakeholders within the school community. Commitment ensures that quality education is provided to learners experiencing learning difficulties and barriers to learning.

Support, in the context of this study, also involves the educational provision made by the teachers to learners who have been screened, identified, and assessed, as learners with learning barriers. External stakeholders assist teachers in the mainstream schools to offer their expertise to establish a barrier-free environment. Furthermore, support should be given to areas where needed development has been identified in order to reduce the impact of barriers to learning. This type of support can promote effective teaching thus allowing schools to function more effectively as well. Landsberg et al (2011) confirms that support, is the cornerstone for effective inclusive education, where all will be respected, accepted and accommodated as it emphasizes that there should be emphasis on how to schools change to become a considerate and supportive setting.

Learners at school should receive support provided by teachers according to their needs. Some learners may require additional support for learning difficulties that they experience. Additional support needs arise from any factor that causes a barrier to learning to the learner. There are different reasons which lead to such needs, such as social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic and disability support, or family and care in some circumstances. Additional support may be required and offered from any school-going age group of learners. A child or a learner, for instance who

experiences learning difficulties, is being bullied, has behavioral difficulties, has a sensory or mobility impairment or is at risk of school drop-out or has been bereaved, are examples of where additional support interventions (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The School Based Support Team (SBST): SBST is the school level support structure that ensures early identification, support planning, programming and monitoring for learners experiencing barriers to learning. It focuses on the identified needs with the intention to make a positive difference to the learner's life. Intervention programmes and assistance by the SBST are monitored and supervised at a school level by the principal, who is de facto chairperson of the SBST. The SBST is responsible for coordinating all support activities for learners, teachers and the school (DoE, 2001). It is mandatory that the SBST addresses the needs of the learners experiencing difficulties in learning by creation of a support plan which will make a positive difference in a learner's life, with the aim of retaining such learners within the normal education system (KZN DBE, 2015). Gebhardt, Schwab, Krammer & Gegenfurtner (2015) affirm that in inclusive classrooms teamwork and collaboration between teachers in a school have vital significance for a learner's achievement. In addition, they allude to the fact that teachers teaching in inclusive schools can face challenges which is why support is vital.

Inclusive teachers should value learners with special educational needs. Support should be provided to all students and collaboration and teamwork amongst them in class ought to be encouraged according to the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, (2012), thus agree that the new culture of education, which is inclusion should be compulsory in schooling as it encourages team-teaching and collaboration, and it nurtures a supportive climate by the school management.

Learning barriers: Boix, Colome, Sans (2017) state that learning barriers are difficulties or challenges which may be experienced by learners, teachers and schools. These can hamper full participation in learning or teaching. Challenges and difficulties at a school can hinder a learning and teaching activity to take place completely. Teaching and learning may be affected by more than one barrier. Once barriers have been identified, a specific level of support should be established to minimize any difficulty for quality of education to place so that learner's skills and knowledge can be developed to the best of learner's abilities.

Rural education: The National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) classifies rurality according to its population size, population density and its distance from an urban centre. The rural area is measured according to its remoteness from the city as people who live in such areas have difficulties in accessing resource in order to function properly, according to Greenough and Nelson (2015). Likewise, Kettler, Mullet and Puryear (2016) maintain that rurality traits include population size and density, proximity to urban areas, types of economic activity, revenue and educational achievement levels, as well as travelling patterns. The education offered in rural areas is understood in relation to experiences of poverty, hardship, backwardness and deficiency (Islam, 2012). Amongst the challenges prevailing in rural areas, there are however many strengths prevalent in the rural backgrounds which go unnoticed. Howley, Howley and Johnson (2014) for example admit that rural people have more collaboration as it is celebrated among families and can involve aunts, uncles and cousins. Relationships and kinship are deemed strong. Amongst the positives of rural communities is how people act as a homogeneous group in support of one another.

Rural schools differ in their remoteness. Measurements depends on various factors. Rural schools differ in size, district size, poverty rates, low enrolment, and how a school grows or drops in enrolment are amongst things measured. Very rich and very poor rural schools may be found close to each other (Fishman, 2013). Rural schools are known as centres of support. Furthermore, Islam (2012) states that their teachers are referred to as mothers, social workers and counsellors because of the pastoral care they offer to learners at school (Islam 2012). Rural schools are often under-resourced and teachers' pastoral work does not accumulate any specialized or individual rewards, despite the evidence signs of compassion and empathy (Deppeler, Harvey & Loreman, 2010). The role of teachers goes beyond the classroom limitations. The task of rural teachers is complex, and there are more opportunities to interact with the learners in informal ways. Formal and informal engagements provide teachers with more opportunities to understand their learners' needs, interests and to build rapport. Beckman and Gallo (2016) confirm the need for 'social significance' that applies to rural schools as they highlight the importance of understanding that rural school communities have unique requirements and structures that require intensive preparation and focused methods. When characteristics and qualities of the rural communities are understood

better, and are addressed, teachers will be able to teach successfully and meet all the local needs of the communities, and by so doing move closer to the goal of ensuring quality education for all.

1.13 Anticipated Problems/Limitations

There were limitations that were anticipated in the study. These included among others, the fact that the study was conducted on a small scale, within a single context, in one primary school. The conclusions cannot not be generalized to all rural primary schools; however, conclusions will serve as the foundation for bigger studies in other provinces of the country. In spite of being conducted on a small scale, it manages to get a deep understanding of teachers' experiences of the support offered by a SBST in a rural primary school. Findings gained from the study can be utilized to provide important information of similar studies, based on awareness of the SBST's role in rural primary schools. Had the study been extended to other rural primary schools, more information should have been gathered. The participants could have opted out of the study, thereby limiting the amount of information to be acquired for this study, but they were very cooperative and responsive during the interviews. Interview times were suggested by the participants. This meant that they could focus on the topic to speak their minds in the interview process. Participants were not intimidated by non- participants who felt that exclusive information is being divulged thereby jeopardizing the credibility of the school. They were relaxed and comfortable with all the questions which were asked during the interviews. In addition, participants were calm and authentic in their responses and comments and did not hold back any relevant and useful information. This indicated an understanding of the study. To eliminate any anticipated limitations, I did not dominate or interfere with data during interviews; all responses were welcomed and they were shared. This allowed participants to be open and free to share their views and responses. As a researcher, I did not in any way influence the interviews but focused on the task at hand: that of an observer and inquirer.

1.15 Division of chapters

The study is outlined in the chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 presented an introductory overview of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews literature on Inclusive Education in rural primary schools in South Africa and compares it to other parts of the world.

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methods used in the study.

Chapter 4 outlines the data obtained and analyses the data captured in interviews.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings, makes recommendations and draws conclusions based on the whole study.

1.16 Conclusion

This chapter intended to orientate the reader to the background and focus of the study. Furthermore, the chapter served to orientate the reader regarding the role of the SBST in rural primary schools. The chapter also provided contextualization of inclusivity in a South African school. Objectives, goals and challenges of implementing Inclusive Education in rural primary school were highlighted in this chapter. A short overview of the research methodology and methods was also presented in the chapter. The following chapter will focus on related literature, the theoretical framework that underpins the study and its relevancy to the experiences of the SBST and classroom teachers in a rural primary school.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore the role of the School Based Support team (SBST) in supporting teachers of a selected rural primary school. Any study flows from studies of previous researchers and as such it became imperative to review what these researchers had to say in relation to what is currently under study. I reviewed the researchers' perspectives and experiences in relation to my current study:

This chapter is structured as follows:

- The context of Inclusive Education internationally and in South Africa.
- The roles and responsibilities of School Based Support Teams
- Support teams for teachers at district and school level
- Learning barriers in an inclusive environment
- Teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education
- Brief discussion on rural education and
- Theoretical framework of the study by using Wenger's Community of Practice

2.2 Inclusive Education

Positives of inclusive education

The introduction of inclusive education in mainstream schools has demanded a change in how teachers teach, assess, organize and accommodate diversity (Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma & Deppeler, 2014). Killion and Harrison (2017) observe that the role of new education designs was intended to make education, teaching and learning happen through well-crafted mentoring programs and similar social arrangements that can connect new and experienced teachers in

learning to teach new practices and implementation of the inclusion education policy. Succeeding the end of apartheid, compulsory education was implemented for all South Africans, and education for all children which segregated education practices, were removed in the system. The Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001 p. 10) drew up the government's new policies for a single, undivided education system for all learners, including those with disabilities. This approach reflected hopes that inclusivity would provide a foundation for a united and caring society. The Education White Paper 6 was intended to convert the South African educational system by building a "joined system" where all learners could learn using a curriculum that is flexible and suitable to the needs and abilities of all learners. By establishing District Based Support Teams, the purpose being to provide comprehensive support for any and all teachers in need and to ensure strengthening of the skills of teachers in order to deal with more diverse classrooms (Muthukrishna & Baez, 2002).

In the midst of challenges, Inclusive Education has been seen as the vehicle to successfully integrate all learners in the mainstream schooling system and ensure their optimal development. It is about supporting all learners with learning difficulties and barriers to learning so that they can appropriate or be integrated fully into the ordinary routine of the classroom in a normal school.

Studies have tended to show that most of the benefits listed above do indeed occur in successful inclusive schools; but truly inclusive education is not easy to provide and it remains an ideal that many schools are yet to achieve (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011; Giangreco; 2013, Negron-Gonzales, 2017; & North South Wales (NSW) DoE Legislative Council, 2017). Implementing inclusion still remains a work in progress, even after almost 30 years of experimentation by trial and error.

2.2.1 Inclusive Education internationally

Inclusive Education emphasizes that child be placed in a normal class, with additional support and special services and then be provided with appropriate care as a necessity to the school. This is seen as the ideal model for creating what can be referred to as authentic inclusion (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016; Griffin & Shevlin, 2014).

Special education has shifted to be known as Inclusive Education (IE) internationally. IE aims to challenge discriminatory and exclusion practices that happen in mainstream schools. All learners should be given equal opportunities to learn and their barriers to learning should be met by the school. Countries in different parts of the world have dedicated themselves to the development and implementation of the IE. Policies, values, skills and knowledge have been changed to cater for the new drive. Carrington & Robinson (2006) warn that for the schools to effectively implement the new drive, teachers' beliefs, skills and knowledge have to be developed in order for them to be able to address the learning needs of all students. Furthermore, these authors reported that in European countries and Australia, more and more learners with special needs are being accommodated in ordinary schools. Classrooms comprise learners with a variety of disabilities and learning barriers. The Australian's attitude with regard to IE in general found to be uncomfortable when interacting with individual with disabilities. The Disability Services, Education in Queensland (2000) believes that this attitude is due to lack of understanding and knowledge of a range of learning needs available, this was reported in the year 2000.

The Australian government now attempts to meet the needs of the education of students with disabilities or special needs by trying to include both the moral and the practical aspects when they define inclusion. Inclusive education to them refers to the viewpoint of fully supporting and valuing diversity of all students as equal members of an educational community. Students which have different disabilities and identified with special needs should not only be merely registered in ordinary school, nonetheless be ensured that environments of education and strategies employed when teaching, are designed to be positive, in such a manner that they include and benefit all students in the region declares NSW DoE Legislative Council (2017, p. 14).

Mahlo (2011) maintains that the United States of America was amongst the first countries, which introduced that to children with special needs, they should be anti-discrimination legislation to be implemented. As a result, the Handicapped Children's Act was introduced. This act allowed children with disabilities to be taught in the same settings as their peers who were without any form of disability. Polat (2011, p. 51) concurs with Mittler (2006) by contending that inclusion is an ongoing journey worldwide to secure basic education for all. Furthermore, with their different views of inclusion, Polat (2011) and Mittler (2006) accept as true that there are no perspectives applied in isolation on IE within countries, therefore they conclude that IE be understood as a

model for development holistically, which will enable learners to be fully engaged with their learning activities.

Peters (2004, p. 10) observed that learners in Canada who were accommodated in the mainstream schools were mostly provided with specialized support from teachers in 2004. In his study, Porter (2000, p. 64) confirms that teachers are the main resources in provision of effective and direct support to other classroom teachers who are encountering challenges when attending to children with learning barriers.

In Namibia, the educational reforms are founded on educational goals of access, equity and democracy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993, p. 32-44). The country put in place mechanisms for removing barriers that prevented some children from attending school in an attempt to effect access to education by more learners. Learners with general special needs and those learners with disabilities in particular were expected to access education through a mode of integration that was based on the ethos of support (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1993, p.130-132).

In the late 1980s in Lesotho, the Ministry of Education passed a policy that stated that all students should have access to the mainstream curriculum. This policy was accepted by Ministry of Education which sponsored teacher training, new programmes at the Lesotho College of Education and a Special Education Unit in the Ministry of Education (Mariga & Phachaka, 1993).

In 1994, the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of the Government of Botswana outlined the development of special education provision and stated that as far as possible this should be through the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools so that they were prepared for social inclusion (Government of Botswana, 1994). It has been envisaged that learners with disabilities or those with more severe learning problems should be taught or catered for abroad if the country cannot meet their needs in special units attached to ordinary schools (Dart, 2006).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) provides key documents in the guiding of inclusive developments internationally. Accordingly, UNESCO (1994 p. 2) maintains that IE is a planned method intended to facilitate learning success for all children.

Furthermore, Inclusion is the guiding principle that informs schools accommodating all learners regardless of their condition from all diverse backgrounds and groups.

A study which was conducted by the National Council for Special Education in Ireland (NCSE, 2013) where data was collected from ten countries, including Canada, Italy, Australia, Scotland, Norway and Japan. The key finding was that: a traditional model with a variety of special educational provisions was evident in almost each country. Aspects which varied were those that involved types of settings, types of categories of impairment and children identified within each category.

In Sweden's compulsory school system, there are two teacher professional support groups who monitor inclusive practices in different schools. There is one known as Special Need Educators (SNEs) with qualifications in special educational needs at an advanced level and another group which is known as general Support Teachers (SuTs) with varying teacher education knowledge and some education in special educational needs (Göransson, Lindqvist, Möllås, Almqvist & Nilholm, 2016). According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2011), Sweden is still measured as the country that have one of the most "inclusive" educational systems in the world. Göransson et al additionally confirm that SNE and SuT groups agree that the occupational support provided to learners by SNEs is characterized by consultation and supervision, developmental work at organizational or group level, assessment and documentation, and screening of individual pupils and groups of pupils and that the SuTs occupational support is characterized by teaching or supervising individual pupils or groups of pupils to a high/very high degree. Both SuTs and SNEs work hand in hand, as one group extends the duties of the other one.

The International Context on Inclusive Education according to the report by Daniele (2015 p. 3):

CANADA - "Full Inclusion" •No Special Schools •Education in general classroom with varying degrees of support

UNITED KINGDOM – "Continuum of Provision" •1% with High Severity needs in Special Schools.

In contrast to the above IE views mentioned, INDIA has increased the number of special schools in most of the country's regions, this then undermines the development of IE.

Most studies conducted confirm that there are benefits which occur successfully in inclusive schools; however, they observe that Inclusive Education is not easy to provide, and it is evident that there is still so much that many schools have yet to achieve (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011; NSW DoE Legislative Council, 2017). Implementation of inclusion still remains a work in development, though it has been around for almost 30 years of testing by being carried out in different countries according to Westwood (2018). Correspondingly, he mentions benefits to schools that practice inclusion and state them as: Benefits to a school from moving towards an inclusive culture include the following:

- greater collaboration among school staff, teamwork and sharing of expertise; • special education staff working more closely with classroom teachers;
- increased use of evidence-based methods of teaching and assessment; • differentiation of curriculum content and the path to learning when necessary; • more effective use made of material and human resources; • greater access to outside services; • increased communication with parents and greater parent participation; • the needs of all students are met more successfully. (Westwood, 2018, p. 4)

2.2.2 Inclusive Education as in South Africa

The White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and training system (Department of Education, 2001) advocates for transformation from 'special and ordinary' education to an inclusive outcomes-based approach education which embraces all: normal and special learners in schools. In similar vein, the key factors in reducing barriers to learning are stated in the Education White Papers 6; such as barriers to Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) within all education and training lies in strengthened education support services (Department of Education, 2001, p.14). Theron and Nel (2005) state that the preventive and additional supportive approach in dealing with barriers to learning is found in the statement by the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and on Education Support Services (NCSNET/NCESS). Engelbrecht (2013) concurs with this notion and observe that the education system in South Africa is premised on the NCSNET/NCESS, (two-prong, three tier) approach to support schools and other educational institutions. According to Prinsloo (2006), two major approaches on dealing with barriers to learning are addressed in two major approaches, i.e. the

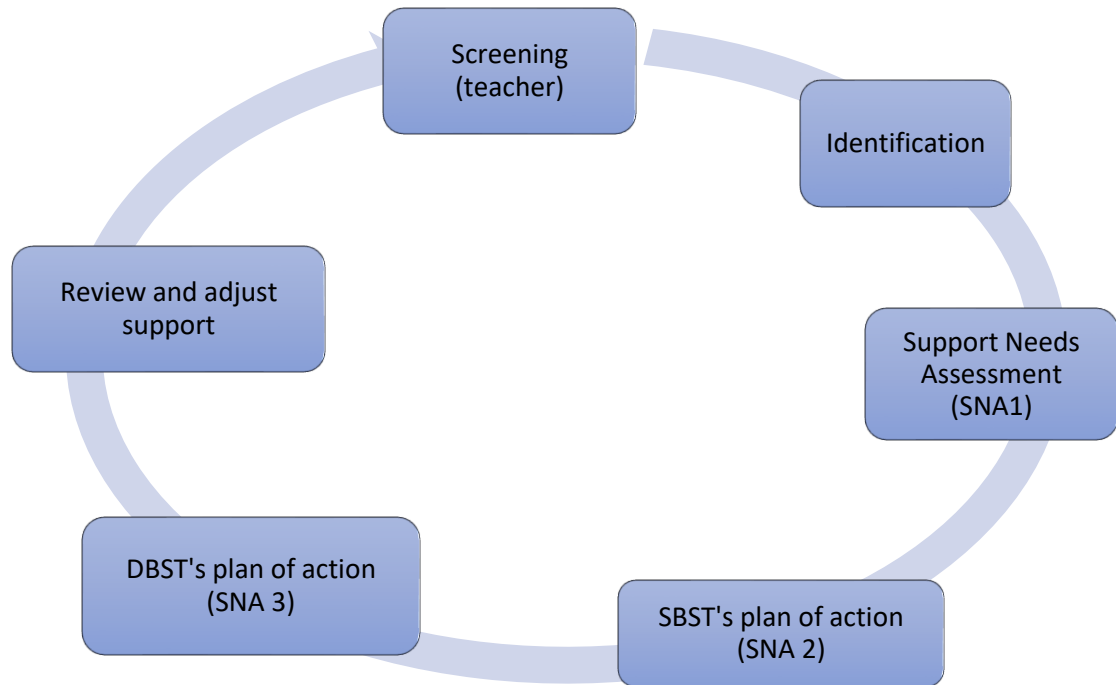
preventative approach and support approach: The preventative approach is the first one that focuses on education establishment transformation and curricula is regarded as the means to on elements of social transformation that can help to prevent the occurrence of barriers to learning and facilitate access to appropriate education for all students. Secondly, the support approach which its attention is on providing education support services to students, staff, parents/caregivers and school. It is within this context that the Department of Education, both nationally and provincially, has provided a broad management framework for education support services. While Inclusive Education has been viewed as a vehicle of transforming education in South Africa, advocates of inclusion such as Griffin and Shevlin (2014) observe that special needs and support have been seriously neglected in mainstream primary schools. D'Amant (2012, p.57) maintains that challenges are experienced by many African teachers, working in rural contexts in reconciling ideological contradictions and tensions between old and familiar, and the new and the unfamiliar. Pillay and Sollojee (2012, p. 51) share similar sentiments about the community of teachers working within the dynamic context of rurality, changing and challenging what it means to serve, to lead and to connect a combination of the transforming sense as well of self (personal). As teachers become life changing experiences for all who inhabit what is sometimes construed as an inhabitable and unbearable position. Accordingly, mainstream schools have been earmarked as safe havens for accommodating the diverse learner population experiencing barriers to learning. In an attempt to address these issues, the Department of Education (2008) advocated for support teams at all levels of education to play a critical role in identifying, screening, monitoring, managing and addressing the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning in their contexts. This necessitated the establishment of the SBSTs in schools which comprise of three portfolio committees, namely, a Whole School Development Committee, an Educator Support Committee and a Learner Support Committee. Among the key functions of the SBST is to identify, address and support the diverse challenges experienced by learners with barriers to learning in an attempt to promote effective teaching and learning (de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011, p. 331) observe that teachers are critical role players in the implementation of Inclusive Education. Such mechanisms must develop several things in the capacity of the system to overcome any encountered barriers which may arise, at the same time prevent any barriers from occurring, and thus that will be able promote the development of an effective learning and teaching environment (DoE 2005). The United States of America and United Kingdom, have their systems in place; where ordinary

schools are available as support resources, tangible and intangible, to cater for learners with multiple special educational needs (Moosa 2014).

Upon the teacher's observations of the learner experiencing barriers to learning with evidence of intervention records, a learner is referred to the SBST for assistance. A parent should be consulted, interviewed and provide a written consent for the SBST to continue with the intervention programme for the learner, prior to referral. Parents ought to work closely with the SBST, providing information essential to begin the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) process. The SBST reviews the teacher's identification of the barrier experienced and the nature of intervention employed by the teacher. Furthermore, the team provides a plan of action, develops intervention strategies and support with all the necessary documentation at their disposal. In the event of the SBST being unable to assist the learner, further support is sought from the District Based Support Team (DBST). The DSBT reviews all documentation provided by the SBST, devises guidelines and table a rate level of support, which is a checklist to determine the decision of support provided to the learner and plan of action in relation to the learner and school. Advice and recommendations to give regarding professional assistance for the parent are also provided by the school. The counselling psychologists administer numerous tests based on the information provided by the respective parent/guardian, citing the rationale for referral and supporting documentation from the school. The assessment report is based on the conclusions and recommendations derived from the information collected during the clinical interview as well as psychological tests (DBE, 2014).

The process of the activities as per the sequences of SIAS (DBE, 2014) is summarized in the figure below:

Figure 1: The process of SIAS



2.3 The School Based Support Teams

The role of the SBST- School Based Support Teams is important:

The White paper 6 on Special Needs Education (Department of Education, 2001) advocates for the transformation of special and ordinary education in schools to be that of an inclusive outcomes-based approach. Mphahlele (2005) states that Inclusive Education should embrace all those learners with special needs in schools and educational structures should be formulated to accommodate all learners. Programmes for the IE, require a collaboration amongst all interested stakeholders to make the learning environment flexible. According to Engelbrecht and Green (2001), teaching and assessment methods should be well planned and organized to support diversity. The Department of Basic Education in South Africa advocates for the establishment of School Based Support Teams across the board which will assist teachers with challenges being addressed and needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning in their specific contexts with regard to Inclusivity (Department of Education, 2015). Rampana (2015) notes that in various countries the teams which coordinate Inclusivity are referred to as School Intervention Teams (SITs), whereas in New South Wales, Australia this co-ordinating team is known as a Learning and Support Team. In

South Africa, the School-Based Support Teams are structures which operates in schools with the responsibility to deal with Inclusive Education and its performance at a school level, as it is documented by the South African National Department of Education. The purpose of having such teacher supporting teams include, among others, organising and managing additional support and be seen offering the personalised and customised education programmes for learners perceived to be experiencing barriers to learning.

The main roles of the School Based Support Team, as stipulated by the Department of Education, 2015, p. 7) are to:

- Identify the needs and address barriers in learning, which will assist schools in reaching effective teaching and learning.
- Develop strategies to access resources available within and outside the school.
- Ensure that the support programmes and strategies developed will be performed efficiently and be able to reduce barriers to teaching and learning.

Makoelle (2014) notes that South African teachers are less critical, reflective and collaborative and there is a necessity to modify the SBSTs so as to be communities of enquiry where they will be able to examine and reflect on inclusion implementation in order to improve and develop Inclusive Education practices of the country. IE practices have aspects that should be developed by experts and officials from the Department of Education at different levels. The SBSTs are guided by policies; they cannot develop their own practices because they need to be supervised and have to account to the DBST at district offices where there is expertise. Stipulated functions of the SBSTs by the Department of Education limit teachers in the development of inclusive practices as they are to bound by implementing practices that are laid down despite sometimes not being relevant to their rural context. The SBSTs' attention is generally focused on the technical aspects of inclusion, with much less on emphasizing support to teachers on teaching methodology.

2.3.1 Composition of the SBST

Sethosa (2001, p. 10) states that the School Based Support Team in South African schools is made of the School Management Team (SMT) and other educational specialists with expertise; for

example, speech or occupational therapists. Furthermore, the team includes parents, who are considered as valued information providers of their children's personal, medical, social emotional, behavioural interests and strengths, health, scholastic history, skills or family situation. Parents are purposefully included in meetings where the procedures of the planned intervention programmes are discussed. Moosa (2014) further explains that parents must be clear about the proceedings of the meetings, even going as far as arranging an interpreter for those who are deaf or their language is not the same as the teaching medium at school. Masango (2013) explained that the school management team have a role to guide, support and evaluate all the programmes and strategies developed at the school level. The head of the school, the principal is regarded as the chairperson of the team, with three focal areas of responsibility chaired by other SMT members.

The centers known as Inclusive Centres of Learning, Care and Support were the provincial strategy to develop schools as centers of support, in March 2009 they were established that, since the learner enrolment at a school is determined by all learners registered at that particular school, the school does not discriminate because of learning difficulties. All learners, including learners with barriers to learning, are the responsibilities of the SBST; such responsibilities are not outside their tasks but rather are a core function falling under the SMT's series of duties (KwaZulu Natal DBE, 2015).

The three-portfolio committees involved are (i) whole school development, (ii) educator and curricular support and (iii) learner and learning support committee, respectively. All these committees comprise of teaching staff as well as other relevant role players in the community. The SBST will have representatives from each phase who deal with issues regarding their respective phases. The principal, as the chairperson of the SBST is responsible for all action plans to be implemented as per respective concerns. The chairperson collaborates with other sectors to initiate development (DoE 2002, p. 10). Each portfolio committee representing the chairperson implements activities and reports on the progress at their meetings. The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2009) observes that all team members should employ an inter-corrective approach that integrates their knowledge and expertise to retain learners within the normal education system. Similarly, in Botswana, a School Intervention Team (SIT) is not different from other countries as it involves, Senior Teacher (Humanities), Senior Teacher (guidance and counselling), Heads of Departments Pastoral Care and Languages teachers,

Mathematics teachers, were ordinary teachers, and be additional members of the team and student representatives, where appropriate (Rampana, 2015).

2.3.2 Functions and responsibilities of the SBST

Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2011 p. 29) argue that policies on their own do not impart new knowledge. They create the occasion for teachers to seek new knowledge and turn that knowledge into new practice. In other words, teachers can learn new knowledge and practices through the implementation of a policy of Inclusive Education. Research indicates that the work of the SBSTs has generated a lot of interest in education and, subsequently, a number of good supports programmes for Inclusive Education have been introduced in schools (Mphahlele, 2005). Training of the SBST members by district officials also considers interpersonal skills, working in a group, problem solving and planning skills as important. Commitment and the active SBST members should result in the given support being effective.

The SBST plays an important role in identifying, screening, monitoring, managing and addressing barriers to learning in their different contexts (Department of Education, 2003). Problem-solving, developing strategies or programmes of supporting classroom teachers are the key functions of the SBST.

Support for effective teaching and learning, should be seen as the key factor in reducing barriers to learning, such as barriers to the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) within all education and training programs. (Department of Education 2001, p. 14). The term support can be regarded as educators' activities that are all used to make learning easier when taking place in learning environments (Ball & Forzani, 2009). The support system also includes different kinds of support implemented in the classroom, such as organization support, providing dedicated learner and educator support, as well as curricular, institutional development and managerial support. (Bricker & Cripe, 2004).

The responsibilities of the SBST, as outlined in Guidelines for Full-service/inclusive schools' contexts (Department of Education, 2010) are set out here:

- Ensure that policies, planning, programmes and procedures include the principle of inclusion
- Identify school needs, and in particular those which deals with barriers to learning
- Assess all curriculum, learner activities, educator activities, and institution development
- Recognize and collaborate with parents, the DBST and other service providers for additional support
- Maintain and register all learners identified as having additional support
- Facilitate training /support for teachers to address additional learner support need
- Develop strategies to address identified support needs of the school, teachers and that of learners to minimize barriers to teaching and learning

Blamire and Moore (2004, p. 14) moreover, recommend that the team should represent and perform many professional functions, but at the same time work as one team with all the inclusive expertise to serve the mainstream schools.

The above functions are not different from those exercised by other intervention teams in other countries. Correspondingly, the primary function of the intervention's teams or School Based Support Teams is to meet the objectives of inclusion and to provide support to those learners who are experiencing barriers to learning in a mainstream school. Giangreco (1997) identified that common features at schools where Inclusive Education is reported to be blossoming. He identified collaborative team work, shared structure, family involvement, clear involvement of other professionals, effective use of interested stakeholders and significant use of guidelines supplied for procedures to be followed.

Collaboration is a crucial element for capacity building in developing inclusive communities. However, limited support challenges at institutional levels of inadequate strategic planning, inadequate resource availability and distribution, lack of district support personnel are among factors that hinder effective implementation of IE. Teachers are demoralized by the imposed reforms, overcrowded classrooms, workloads, ill-training, feelings of incompetency to teach in inclusive settings.

2.3.3 Challenges of the SBST

Opportunities need to be set up for support and collaboration but how effective these hypotheses are need careful planning. Guskey (2002) advocates that support services should carefully be planned to ensure that teachers have enough resources and skills to offer, according to the respective needs. School management teams must support the Inclusion Policy so that it is implemented effectively in schools. The principal, as a chairperson of the SBST, is the regarded as a critical member who is looked upon for direction, according to Masango (2013). Forlin (2012 p. 18) advises that the leader of the school should provide the conducive atmosphere for change, this decreases the stress level in teachers who are then be ready to deal with learners experiencing barriers to leaning in their classrooms.

The SBST members may feel that they operate in isolation when supporting teachers and they are sometimes demotivated and frustrated with their duties. Frank (2003) states that there is a shortage of specialists and psychologists employed by the DBE. The support teams comprising ordinary teachers are faced with challenges to competently and effectively assist when handling learner's needs. These needs are not always easily understood, thus in-appropriate programmes may be recommended with no follow-up from the district.

The District Based Support Teams on the other hand are expected to provide a complete variety of education support services to the SBSTs for them to fulfil their supporting duties effectively, whereas this is not happening, affirmed by Mahlo (2011). The processes of referral are lengthy, tiresome and more often than not never processed, leaving teachers in a dilemma and not knowing how to assist the learner or what to tell the parent as regard the developments made for placement of the learner. In some cases, teachers will be informed that the placement list is long and there are very few schools within the district to accommodate learners, while in other cases, the learner has to reach a certain age for him or her to qualify for placement at a particular school. This leaves both the teacher and the parent frustrated because the learner is aware of his or her limitations while the teacher is bound by the departmental promotion guidelines to push the learner through the system. Thus, understanding what teachers learn in the context of the work of the SBST will provide insight into how the SBST can support teachers in working in an inclusive environment effectively and efficiently.

Research reports has found that while classroom teachers frequently report that they concur with the concept and practice of inclusivity, they accept as true that the needs of learners with disabilities are best met in separate classrooms (Guskey, 2002) where teachers can be able to focus on those diverse learners with more special needs and more severe disabilities (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

According to Bornman and Rose (2010), teachers generally mention that lack of support and resources, as well as the general negative attitudes toward disability, all contribute to the misunderstandings about Inclusive Education in South African schools. Teacher training that provides general or special education to teachers also created attitudes regarding the separate education of learners with disabilities. These attitudes have become strongly embedded in the South African teaching culture (Ntombela, 2011). A number of researchers' findings indicate that workload increases and there is a lack of appropriate skills and formal training with regards to Special Education. Reed (2005) validates that teaching in an Inclusive classroom requires more of teacher's attention, more time spent on planning, and adjusting the curriculum and assessments. In a school setting, such requirements are the responsibility of the SBST, who are also class teachers. Moreover, there are inadequate resources to enable them to recommend effective strategies to deal with learners in class. According to Mahlo (2011), resource material like stationery, appropriate teaching and learning material would promote the smooth and successful implementation of IE in schools.

Collaboration is one of the functions of the SBST which is required to coordinate activities of effective teaching and learning which is proper, in a school. They are expected to work collaboratively with teachers to develop their SBST activities that will benefit all learners experiencing learning difficulties and other needs. The interests, goals and needs of learners inform collaborative decision making, responsibility, accountability and problem-solving initiatives. All of these initiatives should be practiced and ensured within an inclusive community to promote knowledge and skills development. Wenger's theory suggests that there must be ongoing engagements. Ongoing interactions make them a social community (Wenger, 1999). As a community, activities planned require the SBST to work actively as a team in order to provide appropriate support needed by designing programmes that suit identified learning barriers.

Contextually, based activities which will accommodate learning styles and needs, require curriculum changes, thus well-developed personal skills should be built. Empathy, listening skills, respect, maturity and positive body language are amongst the personality traits which Rampana (2015) advises help enable the SBST to function as a valuable resource to the school.

In summary, the SBST members at a school level do not always have the skills and training required to perform optimally. They also feel isolated when having to deal with issues where the district processes has to take the process forward. Resources are a significant challenge they encounter at their rural primary school. A further hindrance is the lack of time and appropriate resources to provide adequate support for teachers and learners Mahlo (2011).

2.3.4 Skills and abilities of the SBSTs

Since the SBSTs comprise teachers and one of the characteristics of all teachers is that they should be life-long learners, Thomas (2000) notes that a teacher can be regarded as accomplished if he/she ready to be a member of a professional community as well as willing and have skills to teach and to learn from his or her own teaching experiences. Lifelong learning and capacity to develop happens if all parties share a common vision. There is an interconnection between all the constructs which shapes and influence the teachers' learning as a human being in his/her community (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013).

Frankel, Gold and Ajodhia-Andrews (2010) state that a number of countries have made several efforts in bringing Inclusive Education policies into practice. They maintain that to successfully implement Inclusion Education policies anywhere worldwide, educators must have suitable training to provide acceptable services, enough support from officials, appropriate skills and, lastly, positive attitudes. Positive caregiving attitudes are also play a significant role as this can impact on resources, sacrifices and time of other caregivers who are willing to engage with learners to receive the best suited education for which they are eligible.

There are sets of skills needed. Teachers are exposed to diversity and such skills are indispensable as they put teachers in a better position to deal with diverse learners. Makoelle (2014, p. 65) notes that the team members of the committees will be more effective if they have undergone professional training and teams possess respectable interpersonal skills. Mphahlele (2005) shares

similar sentiments by pointing out that there are certain team qualities which impact on the team performance. This must not only include operational issues but consider skills ownership. Such skills include: interpersonal and interactive skills, intrapersonal, problem solving, planning and good team-working skills. It is recommended that the team should have formal and informal training as well as knowledge of the IE gained through in-service workshops and from meetings some of which are organized by the DBST. Regular meetings should be held by the SBSTs to discuss challenges and resolutions in IE with the aim of improving their abilities to be able to serve as effective members of the team, according to Masango (2013). Before Inclusive Education was generally accepted and advocated, South African teachers received training to teach either general education or special education in an ordinary school. Such training practices have, in turn, produced skilled teachers who were without the required support skills to teach learners with disabilities and who experience difficulties to learning. Conversely, Gebhardt, Gegenfurtner, Krammer and Schwab (2015) mention that placing students with challenges in inclusive classrooms is not enough; the SBST, together with the DBST, should see to it that good inclusive practices are observed by teachers. Teachers skills, abilities and attitudes should be considered and be improved in order to assist learners. Relevant representatives from the official by constituted teams can ensure that teachers have needed skills and abilities for inclusive classrooms to be functioning. There ought to be changes in beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, and action of teachers and students if good inclusive education is practiced in their classrooms (Engelbrecht, 2006). It cannot be assumed that the teaching activities that are happening in class model inclusivity.

2.4 Teacher Education Support

2.4.1 Teacher education support at district level and at school level

Support is well-defined as activities that bring together all stakeholders and using the available resources to assist in the needs of the school so that the SBST, as the first level of support, is able to efficiently support the teachers. Support, in the context of this study, is the educational action which is the provision made for teachers for easier learning to take place. Offered support services at school should move away from being supportive to individual learners only; the focus should be on supporting teachers who are in the education system with a view to strengthen the skills and abilities of these teachers so that they will be able to respond appropriately to the needs of all

learners and in so doing promoting effective learning (DoE, 2007). Teacher support is provided either at district, school and at a community or public level by the appropriate representatives. There are different forms of formal support structures that is available for teachers and learners. The Department of Basic Education provides the support structures in the form of District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs), School Based Support Teams (SBSTs) formerly known as Institutional-Level Support Teams (ILSTs), Full-Service Schools (FSS), Special Schools as Resource Centres (SSRC), and the community should also be available (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016).

Since research in South Africa has found that teachers experience the implementation of inclusive practices in their classrooms as demanding and challenging, formal educational support structures play an important role (Warren, Martinez & Sortino, 2016 & Engelbrecht, 2013). Classroom support and teachers' necessary skills are vital to extend support that is needed to learners who are experiencing learning challenges. These ought to be provided at their own school community as well as at district levels. Support for teachers at a school level requires a collective effort and a supportive environment from key stakeholders to ensure quality education is provided to learners experiencing learning difficulties and barriers to learning. UNESCO (2004) points out that support involves a group of people who are equipped with skills and are committed and prepared to help learners experiencing learning difficulties and barriers to learning. Furthermore, the appropriate support services should be well organized so that any additional support needed can be provided. Provision of support systems is the key to success (Mittler, 2000). It is imperative that teachers apply "mind transformation" in terms of applying their teaching methods and their attitudes (including cultural attitudes and values) towards learners with special needs who are experiencing learning difficulties (Rampana, 2015).

Teacher support at district level takes different forms as per the schools' needs. The District Based Support Team is the next level of support that reacts to the appeals made by school's support team i.e. the SBST. The DBSTs provide additional support for schools directly to learners and teachers monitor learners who additionally were provided with support (Nel, Nel & Lebeloane, 2013). The DBST comprises personnel from various fields of expertise such as clinical psychologists, occupational and speech therapists, remedial specialists, special needs specialists and other welfare professionals (DoE, 2005a, p.16). The core function of the DBST is to provide support to schools when needed on curriculum and assessment issues and institutional development. The DBST

addresses the challenges encountered, reviews the support provided by the SBST, lists guidelines for intervention to the SBST with the referral process and placements of learners and sometimes provides the school with the needed programmes which will enable them to help learners experiencing learning difficulties and barriers to learning (DoE, 2005). Each district has an established DBST, which is allocated several schools to monitor, supervise and support (DoE, 2001).

Support for teachers and learners and support such as financial support is some of essential examples for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Makhalemele (2011) maintain that the DBST members sometimes find it difficult to perform their roles to the fullest due to the claims of inadequate support received from the National Department of Education. The teams from the districts complain about gaps in the responsibilities of the national Department of Education, the provincial departments as well as in the districts. He further alluded to other barriers hindering their service delivery, which among others are inadequate facilities, resources and infrastructure that are available to DBST members to provide appropriate educational support services at the district level. The outcry is also about inadequate of transport for the DSBTs to visit schools and the vast number of schools in the district in relation to the available human resources (Mahlo, 2011).

For efficient and successful delivery of support to the teachers and learners, the DBST, SBST, Full Service Schools (FSS) and Special School as Resource Centres (SSRCs) should form a community of practice, as according to Wenger' s view of Communities of Practice (CoP). This means that there must be active participation of members of a particular community which in turn should have a significant impact on their other social participation and engagements. Cooperation should be seen to be happening between all the parties or (members) and teachers involved and the DBST and the SBST should take the lead. The two groups should work as a community and have ongoing communication to show common interest towards achieving the goal of helping learners who are experiencing learning difficulties and barriers to learning. If the DBST fails to provide support to SBST within the institutions, learners with difficulties will not be able to benefit from the additional curriculum support offered to them.

Special schools as resource centres (SSRCs), are appropriate centres which offer critical education services to needy learners, especially those who have been identified as learners who require

intensive or high levels of support that mainstream and full-service schools (FSSs) cannot afford to offer. EWP6 has envisaged to better support for special schools. There were aims of converting such school into resource centres in pursuance of supporting mainstream and FSS with expertise and resources (Khumalo & Hodgson 2014). In 2005, the DBE issued guidelines on how the special schools as resource centres will operate. However, Khumalo and Hodgson (2014, Chapter 5, p. 118) listed difficulties faced by SSRs:

- Inadequate and scarcity of support and teaching staff
- Insufficient and inflexible curricula
- Inappropriate set up of the infrastructure
- Poor living and socio-economic conditions and abuse of children in shelters
- Lack of access to learning and teaching resources and assistive devices
- Chronic underfunding which is long term
- Visible abuse, bodily effected punishment and neglect in special-school hostels
- Spaces are inadequate thus have, lengthy waiting periods to get into special schools.

According to Engelbrecht (2010), teachers are faced with multifaceted conditions when delivering the curriculum in their classroom, thus they need assistance and guidance on how to deal with different situations they come across. The Education White Paper 6 (DoE a 2001 p. 19) also emphasizes the training of a range of employees at school in order to focus on “supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met.” In mainstream schools, teachers must find ways to help learners experiencing barriers to learning; learners should not feel discriminated against because of their barriers to learning (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). The SBST skills and knowledge should support teachers by designing programmes which will assist those learners who have been identified as experiencing difficulties in learning and experiencing learning barriers (Makoelle, 2014, Mnatwana, 2014). Resources and expertise should be available to schools so that for the IE policy be implemented. The DBST has to ensure that the Full-Service School (FSS) has proper physical infrastructure, teaching and learning material and skilled human resources who will be able to provide the schools with support programmes that contain appropriate expert content. Full-service schools are recognized as

mainstream schools which are equipped and developed to accommodate the full range of learners' needs in their neighbourhood. According to Khumalo and Hodgson (2014), FSSs however, are often not closer from learners' places of residence, they are either totally unreachable as they require children to travel long distances at their own expense each day. Moreover, boarding at schools is simply but not available.

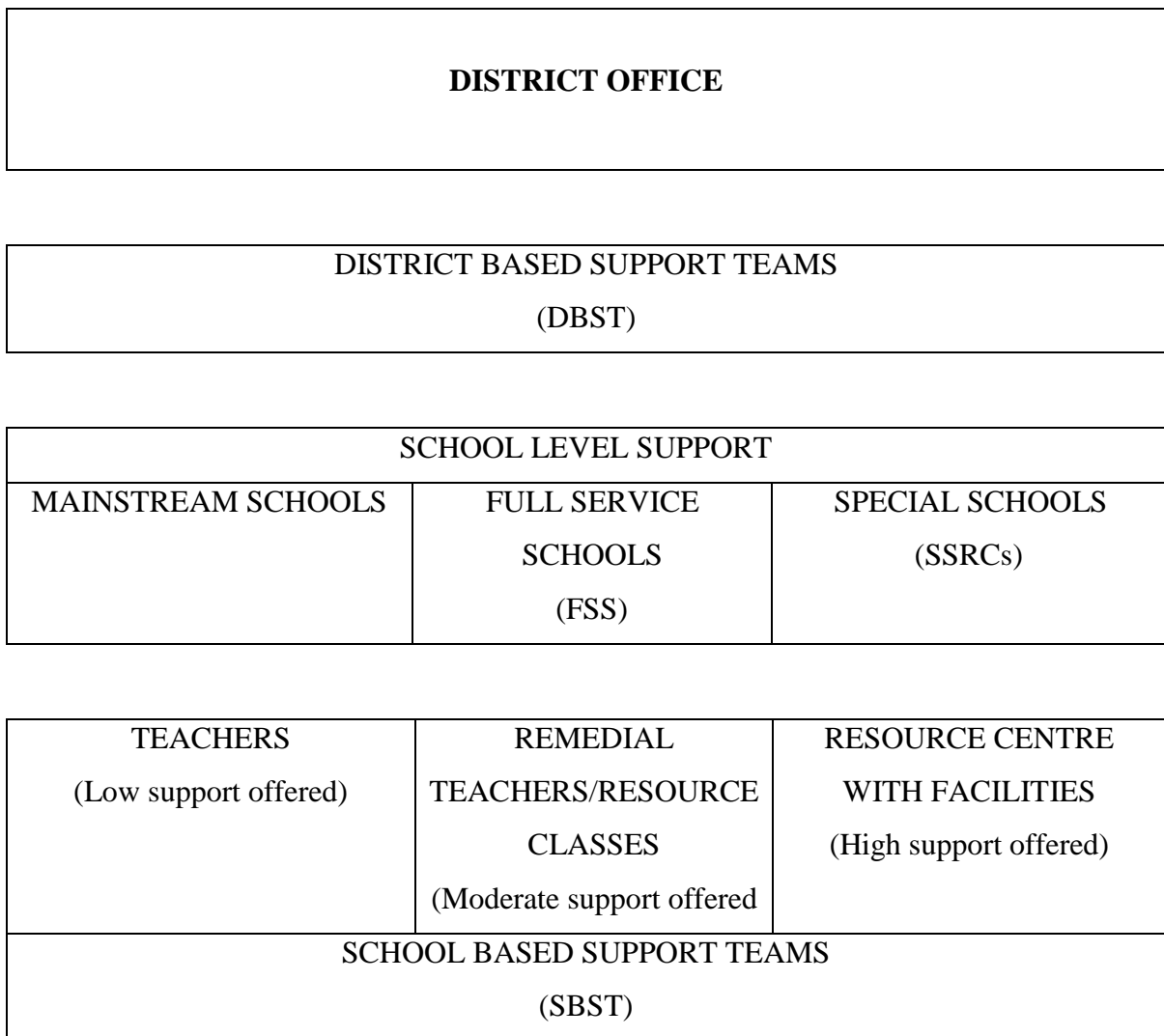
Flexible teaching methods and strategies should be used by teachers in their inclusive classroom, with the assistance and guidelines given by the SBST. The school has to ensure that teachers challenges are addressed by upgrading skills needed by the SBST and the DBST so as to attend to the schools' needs by providing proper support timeously (Mahlo, 2011). Research has found that under-resourced schools with an inflexible curriculum are some of the major reasons why learners experiencing difficulties to learning and that is why these learners do not benefit from learning in the mainstream schools (Swart, Engelbrecht, Ellof & Pettipher, 2002). Pritchard (2009) states that human and material resources remain the main influence involved in supporting learners in schools; however, there are other factors affecting and hindering development such as poverty, violence and family structures.

Teachers have voiced grievances, asserting that help they accept assistance from other education support services personnel does not benefit them in their classes. Teachers involved believe in themselves as the best individuals who understands their learners best, since they are the ones who interact with them most of the time in their classrooms (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007). Learners' difficulties should therefore first be identified and dealt with by the classroom teacher and if the identified problem cannot be solved by the class teacher, the SBST should intervene with expertise and more support. The SBST has to gather its own information and organise sessions to help the referred learner. It is at this point of support where parents and other external support services are consulted for additional support. External stakeholders assist classroom-teachers in the mainstream schools to offer their expertise in order to establish a barrier free-environment (DoE, 2015). Support is supposed to be given to areas where needed development has been identified so as to reduce the impact of barriers to learning. Sethosa (2001) confirms that teacher support teams at school level assist other teachers by empowering them to deal with learning difficulties in their classrooms. If the SBST cannot help the problems of the identified learner, the DBST needs be be

called in to intervene and further support the learner with their expertise. Referral to the district is only done after the SBST has employed different strategies to solve the problem.

Below is a figure summarizing levels of support from the district office to the school level (DBE, 2015).

Figure 2: Levels of support from the district office to the school level



2.5 Learning barriers in an inclusive environment

2.5.1 Curriculum challenges

In a mainstream school, teachers are responsible for teaching all learners with a range of capabilities and abilities. Inclusion of learners experiencing difficulties to learning require that teachers have flexible teaching strategies in order to attend to the needs of such learners. According to UNESCO (2004), the inclusion in education is a process, which addresses diversity by increasing participation of learners that reduces exclusion within the education sector.

The National Council for Special Education, NCSE (RSA DoE 2001 p. 38) states that learners should have learning programmes that are accessible to a range of teaching approaches and such offered learning programmes to meet their individual needs. The curriculum is one factor acknowledged as a considerable barrier to learning. Schools should design strategies which will facilitate and support curriculum differentiation in the classroom. Readiness for inclusion can be an extrinsic barrier to the school. According to Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005) staffing, staff developments and school ethos can also be barriers to learning in schools. Teacher attitudes related to unpreparedness to implement inclusive education can have a negative impact on learners' learning (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Time and support for key stakeholders and teachers is needed as they need to fully undergo professional development programmes to be able to allow for flexibility of the curriculum in their classrooms. Inflexibility in the curriculum can deprive learners' development as their diverse needs are not catered for in the teaching process (Pienaar & Raymond, 2013). The curriculum should be adapted in such a way that it consists of support programmes which address barriers to learning (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht 2010). Different aspects of the curriculum should be made more flexible so as to be accessible in areas, such as classroom management, style and tempo of teaching strategies, the content, the language used as well as teaching and learning resources used in planning and presenting lessons (DoE, 2008). Teachers have the task of supporting and accommodating learners experiencing both difficulties in learning and with learning barriers so that they can reach their full potential. Zwane (2014) contends that a rigid and inflexible curriculum can lead to learning breakdown when it does not permit for individualization. It is a difficult situation when learners are unable to access the designed curriculum, it means learning is not happening. Research has shown that teaching in a

mainstream school and supporting learners who are experiencing difficulties to learning using mainstream techniques, makes teaching and learning a great challenge for both learners and the teacher in an inclusive classroom (Swart, Engelbrecht, Ellof, Pettipher & Oswald 2009). Inadequate teaching and learning materials may prevent learners from accessing the curriculum Kumar (2017). Sometimes learners are even excluded from certain aspects of the curriculum due to ignorance on the part of school, for example, learners being restricted from participating in sport because of their physical conditions (Zwane, 2016). FSS has facilities for diverse learners, which are being made available and should be utilized as these facilities serve learning needs, irrespective of the type of disability or difficulty in learning style pace in the classroom or socially. Such schools are expected to serve appropriately. Establishing strategies should be designed in order to assist in the institutional and curriculum transformations. Such strategies may as well be made to provide learners and teachers with needed additional support to teachers in the mainstream schools.

The DBE (2010) insists that personnel at FSS also need to provide various levels of support to neighbouring schools; they can share resources, technology and skills they have; share ideas on how to prepare good practices and learning materials of inclusivity. The pace and style of teaching the content can be changed to accommodate the learning of learners. For example, Zwane (2016) contends that the use of concrete objects should be used in classrooms where some learners cannot be in line with what is taught.

In the opinion of researchers (Donohue & Borman, 2014; & Nel et al., 2016), implementation of inclusive practices at schools and in the classrooms is experienced by South African teachers as being stressful and they have reported that when providing effective Inclusive Education in their inclusive classrooms, it can be more challenging should there be lack of support from available structures.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 Wenger's theory: Communities of Practice

A theoretical framework in a research can facilitates the dialogue between literature and proposed study. Theoretical framework is understood as one way of leading to a specific conceptual framework, which can also be described as an alignment of the key concepts of the study (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smith, 2011 p. 26). This study adopts Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) as its theoretical framework. Wenger's communities of practice, CoP, is a theory, which focuses on a dedicated group of people with a collective interest who meet on a regular basis to learn and improve something (Lave & Wenger, 1991). A CoP usually consist of a group of people who find themselves sharing an area of interest or having a shared concern. There are three interrelated aspects of a CoP:

Firstly, there is Mutual engagement: through which its participation of the community members builds collaborative relationships and establish norms. Therefore, it is termed mutual engagement. These relationships are the ties that bind members of the community together as a social entity.

Secondly, there is Joint Enterprise: through which their interactions and understanding which is shared can binds them as a community, together. Therefore, is termed joint enterprise. The joint enterprise is sometimes referred to as the domain of the community because it is usually re-negotiated by its members.

Finally, Shared repertoire: through which the community produces a set of communal resources termed their shared repertoire thus known as part of its practice. Therefore, it is used in the pursuit of their joint enterprise and can include both literal and symbolic meanings (Wenger, 1999).

Wenger's theory, which is rooted in the American Pragmatism concept of Community of Inquiry, relates well to the SBST, a programme constituted to address the needs of teachers in an inclusive classroom. Wenger's theory is appropriate for the study because it highlights the view that learning happens better when you participate in a community of practice. The team builds trusted relationship with each other around helping learners who are experiencing difficulties in learning. With their shared unique knowledge and experience related to support, they begin the journey of

working with teachers and other stakeholders. It requires active participation of members of that community which in turn usually have a significant impact on their other social participation engagements. This theory holds that meetings of such a group constitute members who have a common interest towards achieving a certain objective. For the purpose of this study, the objective and the group's interaction, would be promoting Inclusion Education in order to remove barriers to learning. Their ongoing interactions make them a social community (Wenger, 1999). The end result of working in a CoP is that the experience builds collective knowledge that, when implemented, improves each person's performance and can have a positive impact on improving the support offered to teachers because they have now worked together to address the identified problems.

2.6.2 Relevance of Wenger's theory of Communities of Practice to Inclusive Education

The term Communities of Practice refers to groups of people who will grow over time because they share a common concern or a common passion for something. They will do something and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly in their meetings as a community (Wenger & Trayner-Wenger, 2015).

This theoretical framework is relevant for the study as it seeks to understand experiences of the social interactions between the SBST and classroom teachers in an identified rural school. In the same vein, this study seeks to explore and understand the SBST's support intervention strategies and the role and common practices in a rural contextual school setting. Data yielded from focus group interviews provides in-depth understanding of how SBSTs are constituted and how they determine the kinds of support teachers receive during social engagements to be able to implement the Inclusive Education practices in the classrooms.

2.7 Rural Education as the contextual framing of the study - start

Education offered in rural areas is characterised by experiences of poverty, hardship, backwardness and deficiency. Beckman and Gallo (2016) observe that there in the world that we live in; has a big portion of schools situated in the rural areas, hence it is of vital importance to

attend to the exclusive needs of rural teachers and students who face different conditions. It has been explored and discovered that needs and material conditions of national education policies often do not fit with the needs and material circumstances of rural schools in different districts (DoE, 2007 & Azorin, 2018); that without policies being tailored to the exclusive needs and context of rural schools and their societies' circumstances by ensuring equity of access, availability of resources and present opportunities in schools, education is a difficult task. Amongst the challenges prevailing in rural areas, there are however many strengths regarding rural backgrounds which go unnoticed. Amongst the positives in rural communities are people's performance as a group in supporting one another. Local schools are known as centres of support. Teachers are also referred to as mothers, social workers and counsellors because of the pastoral care they offer (Islam 2012). Despite schools being under-resourced and teachers' pastoral work not accumulating any specialized or individual rewards, there are signs of compassion and empathy (Engelbrecht, 2006). The role of teachers often goes beyond the classroom limitations, with more opportunities to interact with the learners in informal ways, despite complex tasks. Formal and informal engagements provide teachers with more opportunities to understand their learner needs and interests as well as to build trust.

The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCSNET/NCSS, 1997) points out that factors like socio-economic deprivation, which includes lack of basic services, poverty, unsafe buildings, exposure to dangerous situations or unreachable locations, mainly affect schools in rural areas and such factors can cause barriers to learning. The DoE (2005) has observed that there are also contextual barriers which can cause the delivery of support to be problematic such as the culture of the school, communication, capacity building amongst teachers or involvement of parents. The variety of areas which amongst others, include adult literacy, pre-primary education, primary school completion and the likelihood is that a child will only transition from primary to secondary school if education in rural areas is addressed properly advises the Global Monitoring Report, (2015) this is the rural-urban gap which is reflected hugely in developing countries.

The role and functions of the SBST have to be clearly outlined so that the role players know when, where and which level of support and assistance should be provided to teachers to help learners in

their inclusive classrooms. Mphahlele (2005) advises that teachers need to be more sympathetic and create classroom environments which are welcoming and supporting. All teachers in the school should participate in the programmes and interventions by the SBSTs to minimise barriers to learning in rural primary schools. He further points out that labelling should be discouraged and a mindset of positive attitudes towards learners experiencing barriers to learning be cultivated. Learners in rural schools are faced with transport, health and welfare challenges. These can be supported by collaborating with other departments in order to meet the learners' basic needs. Engelbrecht (2010) notes that helping learners experiencing difficulties to learning should not be a burden to teachers. He advocates for full participation of all key stakeholders in the community to assist in inclusion work to help learners benefit from all available support internally and externally.

I acknowledge that although systems are in place for teachers to address barriers to learning, gaps for effective implementation strategies have been identified, hence the objectives of the study being to explore the role of the SBST in a rural primary school. The challenge of training existing teachers and equipping them with vital needed skills has been identified as being worse than that of employing and training new teachers (UNESCO, 2015). Gallo and Beckman (2015) contend that when considering and ameliorating the conditions and potentials of the rural societies, teachers should be better able to effectively teach and be given a chance to explore local needs of their communities which will bring everyone concerned closer to the goal of ensuring quality education for all.

2.8 How to improve the efficiency of SBSTs in Inclusive Education

The SBST has an undoubtedly important role to play in supporting teachers in their inclusive classroom so that they can be able to help diverse learners needs, those who are experiencing difficulties to learning and those with learning barriers. The team needs to know and fully understand the needs of teachers and which appropriate support to provide according to guidelines and available resources. Rampana (2015) suggests that the best way to improve the efficiency of support in inclusive education, is to learn how other countries ran their mainstream schools when it comes to inclusion. He elaborates by saying that in England and Wales their mainstream schools

receive support from external stakeholders who spend time at schools and offer their services by giving advice on how to help learners. In addition, Zwane (2016) notes that human resources should be established in a way that several factors such as teacher attitudes and valuable training programmes be considered. These variables will equip teachers with adequate skills and knowledge of inclusivity before they are employed and will capacitate those already employed, with in-service training. Mphahlele (2005) confirms the value of training noting that the SBST's needs composition to demonstrate their willingness to skills development, thus training on a range of issues should be effected. Ongoing training of the SBSTs is recommended in order to provide the team with current and updated perspectives to contribute to longevity of the team. As teachers gain more knowledge and are involved in dealing with issues of learners experiencing barriers to learning, they become more confident and have positive views in supporting other teachers at a school level. The DoE (2008) maintains that the continued support of other external sources will strengthen the effectiveness of the team. Among the external stakeholders, excluding of the school and home, are Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other departments with vested interest in giving assistance to teachers in addressing learning barriers experienced by learners in the classroom. Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel (2016) believe that formal support structures at district and school levels can smooth collaboration and that sharing of expertise from these structures can deliver acceptable support within the inclusive classrooms in mainstream schools. Engelbrecht & Green (2001) view the community of professional involvement as an essential approach to support the teaching processes.

Matlala (2015) pronounces that the SBSTs are struggling to receive the needed support from stakeholders such as the DBST, parents and other departmental entities while Walton and Lloyd (2012) attest to collaboration and teamwork between teachers in a school as essential to afford effectiveness of the SBST in providing the treasured support. Various researchers (such as Donohue & Bornman, 2014 p.13 & Forlin, 2012) hypothesise that for inclusion to be smoothly implemented in South African schools and for schools to fully transform, there should be an improved education system which provides required infrastructure, support and support as well as cultural transformation as needed by the community.

In conclusion, Stofile (2008, p. 82) contends that the efficiency of the SBSTs to lead with success depends on the following changes:

- Commitment to following the policy of Inclusive Education
- Flexibility of the content curriculum
- Attitudes of teachers towards the prescribed policy of Inclusive Education
- Knowledge and skills possessed by the team to address learners experiencing barriers to learning
- Careful consideration of the implementation context
- Collaboration and good working relationships amongst stakeholders
- Initial teacher education programmes need to be updated in an effort to prepare teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms.

2.9. Conclusion

Supporting teachers in a rural primary school is one of the most difficult tasks requiring that multi-intervention strategies be employed in order to address such support effectively. Appropriate programmes and skills in identifying needs are crucial to ensure proper support, guidance and intervention. The success of the implementation of a programme can be determined by contextual factors in which a particular support and intervention takes place. The SBST must be mindful of their roles and responsibilities and how they provide support effectively for teachers to be able to help learners in their inclusive classrooms. An effective, active and fully-functional SBST which works, as being in the community with teachers, will yield good results when common goals are communicated. The SBST together with the teachers must share similar aspirations, vision and common interests to strive towards full involvement in supporting the activities focused on helping learners with learning difficulties, and who have barriers to learning. In an attempt to identify and address the needs of learners, teachers and the school must apply skills which prepare to benefit the institution as an education community. Partnerships should be formed with parents and other external stakeholders to ensure greater success and accountability.

The review of literature focused mainly on the role of SBST, its composition and support provisions in South Africa and globally.

Chapter 3 explores the research methodology applied to the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three focuses on the research design and methodology of the study.

The Chapter outlines the research design adopted in this study which explore the role of the SBST in a selected rural primary school. I begin by discussing and justifying the research method and research design employed, choice of school, sampling techniques, research instruments, data presentation and analysis, validation procedures, ethical considerations and delimitations of the study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) view the research design as a projected outline or as a plan to conduct research. The purpose of conducting this research was to answer the research questions of this qualitative case study. In this chapter I present the research design and argue for the methodological decisions taken in producing the data for the study. Such decisions were considered based on the focus of the study, the delimits of the study and the intended outcomes from the exploration. The research design includes an engagement on the epistemological position that I have taken in this study, the research approach and the process of data collection. Each of these aspects of the research design will be elaborated upon across the various sections of this chapter.

3.2 The epistemological stance taken in this study

Snape and Spencer (2008) note that an interpretive paradigm is where the interpretation and observation regarding an understanding of the social world happens. According to these researchers, an interpretive epistemology means to understand people's lived experiences from the perspectives of the people themselves. Furthermore, they assert that the researcher considers complete understanding of people's experiences by requiring contact with the participants' in-

depth knowledge and understanding of their life worlds as well as their qualitative and subjective aspects. Merriam (2009) points out that meanings are constructed by human beings when they engage themselves with the world that they are trying to interpret. Through the interpretive approach, which informs this study, I obtained a clearer understanding of the teacher's experiences and how these were constructed in their own worlds. Through my school visits, I was also able to understand how the teachers experienced the role of the SBST, its composition and the support and meanings they attributed to these lived experiences.

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) are of the view that qualitative research is a multi-pronged approach that is connected to the study realistically and imperatively. In addition, they claim that since qualitative research consists of interpretive material, it can transform the world into a series of representations using the data collected. They further affirm that qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach. As such the participants of this study presented their accounts of their experiences of inclusive education and the support provided by the school-based support team in their natural setting of their school and classrooms. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3), qualitative research is explained as a situated activity that locates the observer in the real world. Qualitative research is a process which consists of a set of interpretive material practices which transform the world to be visible, endorses Crotty (1998). With qualitative research, the world can turn into a series of representations by including interviews, field notes, memos, recordings, photographs, and conversations to oneself. Qualitative research is viewed as a naturalistic and interpretive approach to the world validates Lincoln and Guba (2007). Therefore, it means that qualitative researchers, attempts make sense and study things as they are in their own natural settings, whilst trying understanding, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, affirms Leedy and Omrod (2010).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) additionally maintain that interpretivists trust that information is subjective because it is socially constructed and mind dependant. They further assert that truth lies within the experiences of human beings. In this study, the subjective experiences of the participants and the truth that they have constructed, based on these subjective experiences is what is considered as socially constructed and is dependent upon their state of mind at the time of their experiences admits Newby (2010). The concluding written findings or presentation gained from this type of research includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a

complex description and interpretation of the study (Creswell 2007). The data produced is therefore based on these subjective experiences and the sense that these participants made of these experiences at the point of data collection. Taking this into consideration, this study, therefore, is located within a qualitative research approach that explores a phenomenon within its natural settings and is described in terms of the human experiences of that pertaining to phenomenon.

3.3 The Qualitative research approaches

A qualitative research approach, through a single case study exploration, was adopted for the purpose of exploring the role of the SBST of a rural primary school within the context of inclusive education. There are procedures available for conducting a case study. In the study by Stake (1995) discusses some approaches to conducting a case study and state the following: Researchers determine if a case study approach is suitable to the research problem with clearly-identifiable cases which have limits and will seek to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases. Researchers next need to identify their case, or cases, which may involve one individual or several individuals, a program, an event, or either a particular activity. In conducting a case study research, he furthermore recommends that researchers should first consider what type of case study is most promising and useful. The case can be single or collective, multi-sited or within-site, and focused on a case or on an issue.

The qualitative research design in the case of this study was employed to generate data in relation to the research questions formulated and also because the study occurs in a natural and live context, which is the school. The SBSTs are pivotal in empowering teachers to develop preventative and promotive strategies and on skills building to address specific learner needs and difficulties in their inclusive classroom frameworks. The purpose of this study was to gather information on the SBST's role in a rural primary school and what the impact is thereof in providing the necessary support to rural primary school teachers. All participants involved in the study shared their lived experiences of the SBST's role, composition and support that they provide in a rural primary school. These lived experiences and perspectives were explored through a qualitative research approach creating a space for effective contextual engagement with participants' verbatim accounts. These engagements paved the way for participants to realise their schools' goals and as

agents in the community of practice. As Creswell (2014) observes, a qualitative study is a means of exploration where variables cannot be easily recognised and theories are not readily available to explain behaviour.

Interactions between the SBST and teachers aimed at providing support in managing inclusive classroom environments and demonstrated how the SBST engage teachers in their professional development initiatives, specifically with accommodating special educational needs. It was also important to collect data on how skills, knowledge and personalities as the processes of support by the SBST commenced. The unique nature of schools provides a platform for teachers to engage one-on-one, in effective group discussions and as clusters to identify similar social interests in engagements that will govern the interaction of the CoP (Wenger, 1999). Creswell (2014) asserted that a purposefully-selected qualitative approach may be used to study people in their ordinary, normal settings. Studying individuals requires going out to their location or field of study. It requires gaining access and collecting data so as to be able to know more about those people. If participants are removed from their setting and if not directly engaging them in their normal surrounding, results can lead to unnatural findings. Creswell further comments that the qualitative approach features the researcher's role as an active learner who can be able to tell the story from the participants' view rather than telling stories as an expert who happens to pass judgement on participants' "experiences". Terre-Blance and Durrheim (1999) concur with this notion and further cite that it would be impossible for the researcher to discover and understand how people create meanings in their natural settings without being involved. By engaging with the participants in their natural setting, I was able to acquire vast knowledge and understanding of their narrated experiences.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) maintain that data collection in qualitative research is shaped from people's rich dense discussions about places and themselves. Data collection in qualitative research includes among others, interviews. Maree (2007, p.87) posits that the aim of conducting interviews is always to obtain rich, descriptive data that will help the researcher to understand the participant's construction of knowledge and social reality. This necessitates not only the interviewer being a good listener but also an active participant for the duration of the interview. Accordingly, the interviewees are afforded time and space to articulate their personal experiences, perspectives and concerns. For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were

conducted with each participant. These interviews shed more light for the researcher with regards the participants' experiences, aspirations, perspectives and opinions of the roles and support provisions of the SBST for teachers who had learners experiencing barriers to learning in their respective classrooms. An interview schedule was constructed, focusing on broad areas of concern around key research questions in the study.

With regard to sampling, Maxwell (2005) suggests that in qualitative studies purposive sampling methods should comprise intentionally-chosen people or a group or the institution for a specific purpose linked directly to the specified research questions. Furthermore, he argues that purposeful sampling strategies selected by the researcher must match the type of study being conducted. With single case study, any sampling method may be used (Yin, 1994). A single case study was used as a methodology adopting a purposive sampling strategy to select the targeted population that would complement the objectives of this study.

3.4 Case study

The case study was employed as a research design for this study to explore the role, composition and support that school-based support teams provide to teachers in a rural primary school. Leedy and Leedy and Ormrod (2006) note that a case study can be studied in depth, stretching over a specified duration. During this period the researcher can be looking closely at an organisation, a programme or an activity until they are understood. Merriam (1998) views the case study as a single entity and a unit which has limits. Yin (1994) posits that the case study is the useful approach to critically study the events in a real situation, and Descombe (2007) states that a case study focuses on one or a few occurrences of an identified phenomenon. He further states that these occurrences are studied with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, connections and experiences occurring in a particular case. Thomas (2000, 2013) argues that there is no one specific method that describes the case study as it is not a method in itself, but best known as a method of inquiry, sometimes referred to as a design frame and it is a platform that informs the basic structures of research.

Stake (1994) approves many definitions of a case study as he concludes that a case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied by a researcher by whatever methods

he/she may choose to study the case. He goes on to state that by choosing to study the case, the researcher can study the case either analytically, holistically, hermeneutically, culturally, and/ or by means of mixed methods. The focus of this study concentrated, on the case.

This study was conducted in the rural area of Embo, Pinetown District, in the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality. The case study is relevant because it provides a better understanding of all the conditions and events as they unfold, critically exploring the role of the SBST in a rural primary school, hence the school was the case study wherein teachers' experience of school-based support was explored within an inclusive education framework.

The case study assisted me to obtain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and lived experiences of the classroom teachers and the support provisions of the SBST. The school accommodates learners from grade one to grade seven, with twenty-two teachers, including five SMT members, namely, the principal, deputy principal and three departmental heads. This study is viewed through the lens of the shared experiences of both the School Management Team (SMT) and classroom teachers of a rural primary school.

3.5 Sampling of participants

Creswell (2007) maintains that the idea of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research which means the researcher chooses sites and individuals for study to take place because they can be central phenomena in the study and purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem. Moreover, he says that decisions need to be made on what or who should be sampled, how many people or sites will be sampled and what procedure will the sampling take.

Correspondingly, Maxwell (2005) observes that purposive sampling in qualitative studies involves people and sometimes an institution which have both been chosen intentionally with the purpose of answering research question. Likewise, Neuman (2000, p. 517) views purposive sampling 'as a type of non-random sampling used by the researcher, where a variety of methods are employed to find expected cases for the study'. According to Cohen et al. (2007), purposive sampling is a process of selecting useful participants that can provide appropriate information for the study purpose. Accordingly, as I am part of the school staff, my direct observations at the school made

it possible for me to deliberately recruit participants that can provide necessary information for the study. I liaised with both the school gatekeepers and participants, with whom I explained the study and its purpose. After an agreement was reached, I sought consent for their involvement in the study. Purposive sampling processes were followed in selecting appropriate participants from both the SBST and the classroom teachers who had learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because the targeted population selected was going to represent the diverse range of experiences with regards to their homogeneity, heterogeneity, gender, professional status and age.

Woolfolk (2007) is of the view that participants of the study are generally refer to ordinary people like teachers. The participants chose for this study were all teachers from one primary school in the rural Embo area who constituted the SBST and classroom teachers of this rural primary school. These participants comprised of seven SBST members, of whom four are SMT members and three classroom teachers who were representatives of the three phases that are currently at school. The SBST provided information on how they were constituted and the nature of support they provide to classroom teachers within an inclusive framework at the school. The SBST was further involved because of the purpose of this study which sought to explore their role in providing support to classroom teachers who had learners experiencing barriers to learning.

The SMT was selected because of their members responsibilities in ensuring effective management in curriculum monitoring & supervision and policies implementation and, particularly in this case, the Inclusive Education policy at the mainstream school. One teacher from each phase represented their phase mates, i.e. the foundation, intermediate and senior phases. Classroom teachers who were selected to participate in the study had long service and engagements at this school because they had been receiving support from the SBST for a minimum of five years. The other reason why they were also selected to participate in the study was because of their direct involvement with learners who are experiencing barriers to learning in their respective inclusive classrooms. The three selected classroom teachers were not members of the SBST thus were purposively selected for providing and validating data collected from the SBST. Durrheim and Painter (2006) caution that sampling does not only rely on availability and willingness to take part in the study, but those participants selected should display particular characteristics for the desired population. Classroom teachers were willing and prepared to share with me as a researcher, about

the nature of support they received from the SBST of their rural primary school and how such support assisted them in teaching within an inclusive rural primary framework.

3.6 Data collection methods and procedures

Qualitative research data collection requires that the researchers dedicates him or herself in the participants' space Neuman (2000). Anney (2014) agrees that one should be on site, being physically present as a researcher in the field, helps the researcher himself/ herself to gain a better understanding of the background of the study, which will lessen any falsifications of evidence that might arise. The researcher's extended time in the field with the participants improves the trust of the respondents and provides a greater understanding of the participants' culture and context. The lengthy time period in the field is important because a strong bond between the researcher and the participants increases. Being in the field can change the attitude of the participants and they may volunteer differently and often the more sensitive information can emerge and be shared openly than it did at the beginning of the study. Lengthy time period in the fieldwork helps the researcher to greatly understand the fundamental issues that might positively affect the quality of the data collection because trust can then be strongly established with study participants.

The data collection for the study was mainly conducted through interviews. For the purpose of this study, personal interviews and focus group interviews, which were semi structured in nature, were conducted. Focus groups interviews are beneficial because of their nature. Interaction among interviewees of focus groups likely to yield the best information because often interviewees are similar and cooperate with each other. Moreover, when time to collect information is limited, focus groups are useful, and, lastly, when individuals are interviewed on a one-on-one basis they may be hesitant to provide useful information (Kruger, 2000, Morgan 1988 and Stewart & Shamdasani 2015). However, they caution that with focus group interviews, researchers should encourage all participants to talk, share thoughts freely and not hesitant to express themselves. They add that at the same time, researchers should monitor individuals who may dominate the discussion.

Kruger (2000) continues by stating that carefully choosing the venue needs to be considered. The less eloquent and shy interviewee may present the researcher with less but pleasing data. For best

results recording the participants discussions when conducting one-on-one or focus group interviews are recommended.

The choice of using these data collection methods was to better understand the narratives of the roles and experiences from the SBST and from the perspectives of teachers who received the support in dealing with learners who are experiencing barriers to learning in their respective inclusive classrooms. Cavana, Delahaye and Sekerana (2005) assert that personal interviews comprise an information gathering process where an interviewer and interviewee meet in person. Chilisa and Preece (2015) argue that in semi-structured interviews, it is claimed that the sequencing of questions posed are not the same for all participants as this rests on the individual's processing thoughts and answers. Accordingly, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) believe semi-structured interviews are best used when you want to get more than one chance to interview someone to collect data. Semi-structured interviews with the classroom teacher participants and focus group interviews with the SBST were conducted.

Maree (2007, p.91) observes that a popular format for the focus group interview is a 'formal structure' where a researcher can start with a broad and less structured set of questions to draw participants into the conversation. Focus group interviews were conducted because data yielded provide the researcher with better understanding of the phenomenon under study. This might not have been otherwise available in a one-on-one interview.

I met with participants in an arranged quiet office for an interview which took nearly thirty minutes for each. At the completion of the interview, I gained a better understanding of the experiences of the participants because they were relaxed and comfortable with the process.

Throughout the of interviews, insights into the role of the SBST in the school were obtained and clarified and in-depth information on teacher support was based on school issues at which were discussed. Similarly, face-to-face personal interviews were held with each participant at a time and place convenient to them. Interviewing the SBST and classroom teachers individually provided me with the opportunity to ask probing questions and that happened when the last session with the focus group interviews was conducted. By so doing deeper and more insightful information was obtained. The interviews were audio recorded with permission for such recording from the participants of the study.

3.6.1 Instruments: Interviews

3.6.1.1 Individual interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with the aim of establishing the core information and afforded classroom teachers an opportunity to present their lived experiences of the role of the SBST in the rural primary school in the Embo area. An interview schedule with questions that focused on the role of SBST support in a rural primary school were prepared. Maree (2007) states that the interview schedule mostly describes the line of inquiry for the researcher to use during the data collection of the study.

Mason (2002) claims that all qualitative and semi-structured interviewing has certain central features which are common even though distinctions in their style traditions are recognised.

Below are common features as adapted from Mason 2002, p. 62:

1. The interactional exchange of dialogue (between two or more participants, in face-to-face or other contexts).
2. A thematic, topic-centred, biographical or narrative approach where the researcher has topics, themes or issues they wish to cover, but with a fluid and flexible structure.
3. A perspective regarding knowledge as situated and contextual, requiring the researcher to ensure that relevant contexts are brought into focus so that the situated knowledge can be produced.

Mason (2002, p. 1) lists some of the strengths of qualitative interviews that are sometimes lost from sight, she says that through them we can explore:

- the texture and weave of everyday life;
- the understandings, experiences and imaginings of research participants;
- how social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work; and
- the significance of the meanings that they generate.

As a researcher, I employed follow-up questions in order to clarify any misunderstandings from the participants while the interview guide ensured that I collected similar data from the

participants. I conducted interviews with each classroom teacher of each phase. The purpose of these individual interviews was to engage with classroom teachers who deal with learners who experience difficulties to learning in their classroom with the intention of obtaining their perspectives and experiences of their daily interactions with the SBST. I asked questions, listened to their opinions and views and gained an understanding of their lived experiences of the SBST role in their rural primary school. They shared ideas and information about the challenges they were experiencing about teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms and the support they received from the SBST. Individual interviews are more effective at producing a comprehensive variety of items point out Namey, Taylor and Eley (2017). The interviews conducted for the study were tape recorded to obtain raw data of these narratives. Each interview lasted between thirty to thirty-five minutes. Opdenakker (2006) confirms that using a tape recorder during interviews is beneficial because it is more accurate than writing notes. During interviews, I observed body language and facial gestures which were demonstrated by the participants paid my attention to the interviewee's responses.

3.6.1.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews are recognised by Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) as interviews which bring people together in different forms of communication. Among the types of focus groups, the single focus group is the common one. The discussion is interactive and about a subject by a group of all participants with a facilitator as one group in one place. This type of data collection has been widely used by both practitioners and researchers across disciplines which are different attest Ochieng, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee (2018). The latter further allude to the interviews of the focus groups as being dependent on the facilitator's skills for success, who will be fully operational in guiding the group's discussions till the end. The facilitator should possess certain number of techniques and skills to ensure that the issues are discussed broadly among other skills can be listening, observation or communication other skills.

Interviewees can communicate through the internet, video conferencing or physically in an office or at home. Nyumba et al additionally note that focus group interviews can serve as a stimulus for discussion when they occur in a natural environment like home or office. Correspondingly, Krueger and Casey (2015), assert that in focus group interviews, there is a better understanding in

discussions about how people feel or think about a particular issue or rendered service. Participants are selected to participate because of common characteristics they possess. They recommend that the discussion must take place in a non-threatening environment. A group of between five to twelve people can be led by a skilful interviewer who conducts the discussions in a relaxed atmosphere while seeking for ideas and perceptions of the interviewees so that they flow and the desired results be achieved.

Focus group interviews were held with the SBST to gather information about its constitution, the nature of support provided for teachers and any other information relevant to the study focus. Focus group interviews were held in one afternoon in a room arranged by the principal. This interview was an hour and thirty minutes long.

Focus group interviews create a space for sharing opinions about the manner in which the SBST provide support in a rural primary school. Namey et al. (2017) says that numerous sorts of sensitive and personal discoveries are more expected in a focus group setting, and that more themes can usually occur in the focus group setting. Wutich, Lant, White, Larson, and Gartin (2010) advise that amongst other things, there can be limitations in focus group interviews such as, the unwillingness of participants to share information, which I addressed by asking questions that did not evoke undesired responses from the participants. Focus groups interviews were used because the participants were understood to be the experts of their own life situations. The SBST had a role to play and had experiences of providing support to teachers, they knew where and when they had experienced challenges and what intervention strategies were employed to address these challenges in their rural primary school.

3.7 Data analysis

A qualitative analysis was used to analyse data in this study. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) maintain that analysis of data can be referred to as a science of researchers. Analysis comes after recognised procedures have been done and certain methods and techniques are accepted for analysing written data. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) validates that a case study researcher begins to analyse the data as soon as the data collection process begins so I started analysing data from the commencement of the data collection process. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) correspondingly

establish some phases which are involved in analysing data in a case study. The phases they suggest were organising, categorising, interpreting and identifying of patterns, synthesising and then generalisation of data.

Empirical data collected from interviews at a rural school were organised into themes and sub-themes. Esterberg (2002) and De Vaus (2014) advise that categorising data into small manageable sets of meaningful themes and sub-themes assists in manipulating the data to form a coherent picture or story on aspects of the study purpose which when brought together provides a response to the research questions that guided the study and which ultimately aligns with the purpose and intention of the research. I thus identified themes and sub-themes to manage, organise and summarise data in a meaningful way. I followed the suggestion of De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2002) by identifying five or six themes as well as sub-themes with the aim of reducing data into small and manageable sets of groupings. The interview transcripts were read several times to familiarise myself with the participants worldview of their experiences of school-based support for inclusive education. Emerging themes were noted and given colour codes. The colour coding process assisted in managing the data in a coherent way and helped to separate the data into meaningful chunks that allowed for further refinement. Each coloured data set was then subjected to further engagement where the sub-themes were established and data separated according to these sub-themes. Further refinement allowed for the finalisation of the themes and sub-themes after which the analysis followed.

3.8 Trustworthiness in the data collection process

Authenticity, credibility, dependability and transferability are the criteria that were mainly used to give assurance of trustworthiness to the study. Creswell (2003) argues that qualitative research draws on terms such as ‘authenticity’, ‘trustworthiness’, and ‘credibility’ to refer to ‘validity’. In this study, these criteria were used to ensure rigour and to verify findings during data generation session. As such, the purpose of the study was declared to participants. Bernard (2006) observes that asking multiple participants the same question is of great help. In qualitative studies, researchers use transferability, dependability, confirmability and credibility as trustworthiness standards to ensure the accuracy of qualitative results (Lincoln, & Guba, 2007).

Trustworthiness of data in this study was enhanced by using different instruments for data collection. These data collection instruments were focus groups conducted using semi-structured interviews with SBST members and personal interviews with classroom teachers. Interviews permitted saturation, of rich and thick data from the participants. Interviews as data collection instruments used complemented each other and at the same time formed a qualitative inquiry core, revealing understandings, perceptions and experiences of the people interviewed. Trustworthiness of interviews was also established through audio recording and transcription of the interviews. These formed the basis of the analytical process. The authenticity of information, as narrated by the participants in their own words were subjected to a member-check process whereby each of the participants was provided with their transcripts and they had to confirm that the recordings were a true reflection of their narratives.

3.9 Ethical considerations

I followed correct and appropriate procedures to obtain permission to conduct the study. Letters were sent to relevant departments and people. I obtained a certificate of ethical clearance from University of KwaZulu-Natal's ethical office granting approval to conduct this research project (see appendix F). Also, a letter was written to the school principal as the gatekeeper, requesting permission to use the identified rural primary school and permission was granted (see appendix B). Another letter was written to the SBST members and classroom teachers as the targeted sample or the participants of the study (see appendix A) at the case school. Letters to sought consent for all participants to be interviewed were sent out, requesting permission and also assuring the participants of the confidentiality of the interviews. Pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants and their responses were to be used in the study. Participants were assured that their participation in this study was voluntary as withdrawal was recognized as a right that they could exercise at any time during the research process. Participants were informed about the use of audio the tape during interviews and that informed all data collected from the audio-tape would be deleted after transcription. Feedback was to be given on both the information provided and the research findings.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the qualitative research methodology with the case study research employed in the study. I have also covered the choice of data collection instruments through the use of focus group interviews and personal interviews. These data collection instruments will be used to generate rich and in-depth information to allow participants to relate their own experiences through narratives as stated. Sampling and site identification procedures have been provided to yield relevant data from this targeted group of participants. Data generated was used to understand the experiences of the SBST and classroom teachers was highlighted. Validity and reliability of data were discussed. Ethical considerations which emphasised confidentiality were explained.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Having presented, in the last chapter, the research methodology employed for producing the data for the study, I engage with the data in this chapter, hence, this chapter presents the data gathered within identified themes and forms the basis of the analysis and findings of the study. This chapter, therefore, summarizes just how the data were collected, followed by an explanation of how the data were managed, organized and analysed. The major part of this chapter then presents the data according to three themes and illuminates the findings of the study. The findings are then engaged through a discussion. The chapter concludes with a theoretical explanation of the key findings.

Data collection and analysis

Noting that this study was located within an interpretivist epistemology and that a case study methodology was employed, one-on-one interviews and a focus group interview were the main source of data. A purposively-selected primary school formed the site of the research and this school was located in the rural area of Embo, in the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality. The SBST members and classroom teachers were the participants for the study.

This study aimed to understand the role of the SBST in a full-service school and the nature of support teachers received in accommodating and addressing the needs of learners within an inclusive education framework. The interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were read repeatedly to get a deep insight into what the participants had said in their interviews. This deep insight then afforded me the scope to identify a few emerging themes. I then discussed these emerging themes with my supervisor and through our discussion, we settled on suitable emerging themes. I then gave each of these emerging themes tentative names and a colour code. I then scanned through the transcripts of the interviews and colour-coded the information according to

how they resonated with the emergent theme. Having completed the colour coding across all of the transcripts, I then brought together the colour-coded information through a cut and paste process into a separate document. Each of the colour coded set of information were then reviewed and organized into sub-themes which were given titles. The titles of the sub-themes within each theme then formed the framework for data presentation, analysis leading to a finding and discussion. The names of the tentative themes did not change and they became the final themes for this data presentation and analysis chapter.

The data are presented within each of the three themes identified. The voices of the participants are in italics and change of font is to distinguish between the respondents' word and analysis and discussions that emerge from the respondents' spoken words. The respondents' actual words, as extracted from the interview transcripts, formed the evidence and the basis of the analysis and discussions. This form of representing the data is consistent with the epistemological stance taken in this study, that being an interpretivist epistemology.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Profile of teachers who were interviewed

Table 4.2 outlines the profile of teachers and how they were grouped according to gender, age, teaching experience and qualification

Table 4.2: Teacher's biographical profiles

TEACHER	GENDER	AGE	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS
A. SBST, SMT, Chairperson of the SBST and co Ordinator of all committees	Male	47	22	STD, BA
B. SBST, SMT, whole school	Male	55	25	SPTD

evaluation member				
C. SBST, SMT, Learner needs committee chairperson	Female	52	25	JPTD, BA, B.Ed. Honours
D. SBST, SMT, team, Whole school evaluation committee chairperson	Female	52	18	SPTD, HDE
E. SBST additional member, Foundation Phase	Female	50	21	JPTD, HDE, B.Ed. Honours
F. SBST additional member, Intermediate Phase	Male	58	28	SPTD
G. Non SBST, Classroom Teachers (CT) Senior Phase	Female	32	8	B.Ed.
H. Non SBST, CT Foundation Phase	Female	41	5	B.Ed., B.Ed. Honours
I. Non SBST CT	Female	54	28	SPTD, BA, ACE
J. SBST additional member, Senior Phase	Female	56	33	SPTD, HDE, BA, Management certificate

According to this biographical profile, all participants are qualified teachers, with the majority of them having substantive teaching experience. Most are mature individuals and some have qualifications beyond an initial teacher education qualification.

4.3 The case study school

Geographical location of the school:



Figure 3. Aerial view of the school

The study is located in the rural Embo Reserve area, within the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, Molweni Ward in the Pinetown District, as it is shown above. The school is approximately 7 kilometers away from Hillcrest, KwaZulu Natal. It is a public school which caters for the children who lives in the surroundings. Based on the socio-economic conditions of the community and the circumstances of the learners who attend, the school is in the lower quintile; it is a no-fee school. This means no fees are charged. They do not charge school fees. Most of learners walk to and from school. The school learner population is 100% African learners, all from

the same socio-economic background but with different family structures. Most learners live with parents who are either domestic workers or are unemployed, some receiving the government social grants. Some learners are in the full care of grandparents, known as *Gogos*. The number of learners attending the school is around 760 and 780 in a year and the school offers classes from Grade 1 to grade 7. They have twenty-two teachers, who are also Africans, five of whom are part School Management Team, comprising the principal, deputy principal and three departmental heads. The school has a daily nutritional programme providing a healthy meal for all learners; the meals served in the morning at 10:20.

4.4. Theme 1: Challenges faced by the school within the context of rurality and inclusive education

The literature on rural schools and schooling in South Africa is extensive and fairly well documented. However, research on inclusivity (inclusive education as guided by the inclusive education policy) within rural schools is less extensive and this study attempts to contribute to this bank of literature with a focus on the role of the SBST in rural schools in assisting teachers in working within an inclusive education framework. Within this theme I explore the challenges faced by the case-study school in providing an inclusive education to its learners. The challenges are experienced in different domains of schooling and each of these domains forms a sub-theme within which the data is presented and engaged with. The first of the sub-themes is the challenges of being a rural school, followed by sub-themes that explore the challenges experienced by the school, the teachers and in providing Inclusive Education.

(i) Being a rural school

The literature on rural school education paints a bleak picture of schooling. The challenges noted in the literature include infrastructure which is poor, lack of adequate resources for teaching and learning, lack of parental interest in the learners, and teachers receiving little curricula support from the Department of Education officials (Mnatwana, 2014). This bleak picture, as presented in the literature is confirmed through the data collected at the researched school. The case-study

school is a rural school, and, drawing from the focus group interviews, the challenges at rural schools are very similar to those expressed by the focus group.

The views expressed within the focus group interview were echoed by the teachers who taught learners within an inclusive education framework in a rural environment. Both classroom teachers and the SBST members, agreed that was not easy to work in a rural primary school and cited different reasons.

The teachers interviewed say that:

“Needed support from the DBST and other officials does come on expected time because of the proximity of the school” (Participant I)

Proximity to required services for rural schools is a challenge that this teacher alludes to. Being a rural school means that the appropriate support that the school needs may not materialize or that they may arrive at the school after the critical moment when those particular services were needed, hence proximity is a huge challenge to this rural school.

“It is difficult because parents are not cooperative; they just dump their kids on us and don’t make any follow ups with regard to their children school work.” (Participant H)

“Parents are domestic workers and some live away from their homes and unable to assist with homework or any other extra projects given by teachers at school requiring their assistance.” (Participant G)

Parental support was also noted as a huge challenge in rural schooling. Participant H confirms this and adds that school education becomes the sole responsibility of the school in this rural context. Parental support in the education of learners is known to enhance teaching and learning as noted by Garcia and Thornton (2014). This alleged nonexistence of interest from parents in the education and learning of their children by the teachers shows the plight of teachers in seeking assistance from parents or caregivers in educating the learners. I say “alleged” as this study did not seek to establish from the parents why there is a minimal parental involvement in the education of their children. However, Participant G alludes to a reason which is about the distance. Due to economic challenges of being in a rural area, parents have to migrate to other parts of the country to earn a

living and are therefore not available to the school. This distance between the parents and the school contributes to the challenges that rural schools face.

There are other challenges of being a rural school as gleaned from interviews with the focus group of the SBST participants.

“Poverty is rife in this part of the world; battling so much to have enough resources. Burglary and vandalism have hindered efforts and developments made in the school. There are not enough safety and security measures in place. The little that we have such as a fence and burglar guards, have been removed by the very same community we serve.”
(Participant D)

Participant D alludes to the realities of economic deprivation in rural areas where people are forced into criminal behaviour in order to survive. This economic deprivation has a ripple effect on schooling within a rural context. The school development that is needed is compromised by criminal intent and as such little or no development or resources are provided to the schools in rural communities for fear that these will be destroyed or stolen, as alluded to by Participant E:

“It is so discouraging and demotivating when facilities and resources are limited and destroyed. There are so many learners experiencing difficulties in learning. We know that some learners come from child-headed homes, while others live with grandparents who know nothing about the child’s background.” (Participant E).

Participant E also alludes to the learning difficulties that learners are experiencing and with which the school cannot cope. The school needs the assistance of the caregivers of these learners. Absence of parents in the households is also noted as a challenge for rural schools resulting in the extra support that the school needs not being attended to in the homes of learners. Participant B highlights the importance of having access to parents who has crucial information about the learner that the school needs in order to provide an inclusive education for the diversity of learners that attend the school.

“Even in cases for referral, we do not have sufficient information about the learner because parents either work far from home or are deceased. Grandparents who are legal guardians

to some of these learners reveal that they obtain a birth certificate and do not know the paternity of the child left in their care.” (Participant B)

Participant B mentions that this lack of adequate information from parents and the background of learners is fueled by social ills and sometimes they do not feel that teachers can offer beneficial information to schools which can change the livelihood of their learners. Strategies should be designed to come up with ways to include parents in school activities so as to improve learners performance so that their confidence is strengthened. Parents should get proper information about the policy of IE. Fears of isolating a child will be diminished. Knowledge of IE will be assured to parents

“Poverty, social ills, such as drug and substance abuse, teenage pregnancies and violence have become the order of the day resulting in high school drop-out rates, especially by learners who have been experiencing learning barriers.” (Participant F)

Participant F expresses a concern about the social ills in the community where they work. These impede progress, especially of the youth who end up dropping out of school or falling pregnant. These are common drawbacks and are related to poverty stricken areas as the community has a minimal access to needed facilities (Wanka, 2014).

The findings, emerging from this sub-theme are that being a rural school means that the challenges experienced are severe and there are no resolutions in sight. Furthermore, the challenges of being a rural school include that of being remote and distant thus resulting in no timely interventions within the school. Distance compromises efforts to provide adequate Inclusive Education to the school.

(ii) Challenges experienced by the school

Poor response and inadequate assistance from specialist support of the district and inclusive experts’ officials, is experienced by teachers in rural environments, thus Inclusive Education and addressing special needs is compromised and becomes a futile exercise because of insufficient support and resources. The support from the officials is not immediate because of the locality of the school. Teachers therefore make contingency plans on a long-term basis to cater for the

learners' needs as they are aware of the response they will receive from the Department of Education have delays. The school has big enrolment in all phases as there are few schools in the area.

“Lack of needed resources including specialist working within the school compromise the Inclusive Education.” (Participant D)

Participant D voiced the frustrations associated with the unavailability of required resources to support learners they have enrolled as a rural school. They point out that regardless of their obligations and commitments to assist and support inclusive classroom frameworks, the difficulties and inconveniences are overwhelming because of rural conditions of their school.

“With the limited facilities at our disposal, it is not surprising that teachers are unable to help learners. This is among the reasons that we sometimes unnecessarily refer cases that we could have otherwise dealt with at school level.” (Participant A)

Participant A corroborates the concerns about resources and facilities as alluded by participant D voiced them out. Learning and teaching materials are viewed as being important since they can increase a learner's achievement significantly. Kumar (2017) explains that teaching materials reinforce what the teacher is teaching to the learners.

“Teachers do improvise and come up with alternative means to help learners, but the unavailability of appropriate resources hinders such attempts of support they wish to provide.” (Participant J)

Participant J points out some of the inventions which teachers use to make the classroom environment conducive to learning. Teachers come up with the means to avoid circumstances they experience at their schools. For effective teaching and learners receiving full support and creativity are essential to involve learners to their full capacity, regardless of the disability.

“Time and overcrowded classrooms in intermediate and senior phases make early identifications in the first two terms difficult for teachers. Issues of disciplining unacceptable behaviors of learners, delays and affects teaching and learning. (Participant C)

Participant C touches on the other challenges which a school in a rural area experience. Among concerns mentioned are overcrowding and time constraints. Because of their locality as a school and a limited number of the schools in the area, they find themselves over admitting. Large numbers cause disorder in the classroom and there are delinquents who take advantage of the situation by being uncontrollable. Teachers thus have added challenges; that of managing other aspects instead of providing effective teaching and providing support where needed, especially to those learners experiencing difficulties in learning. With little attention to learners experiencing barriers to leaning, it can cause learners to perform poorly in their classroom tasks generally.

Lack of resources and limited facilities including specialists working within the school is also a challenge faced by schools in rural areas. The facilitation of school programmes and classroom activities, which are in line with the IE policies, present challenges because of the conditions experienced by the school's rurality. From the above responses there is a consensus that the school's SBST is fully functional, in line with the DoE (2002 p. 46) expectations; teachers and the SBST are doing their best amidst challenges. Lack of adequate and relevant teaching and learning resource distribution is perceived as a key factor in not addressing the identified challenges in rural setting.

(ii) Challenges as experienced by the teachers

Access to parents is almost non-existent as most parents do not live with their children. Many learners are cared by grandparents (*gogos*) who have very little educational background or are poorly educated and experience health problems. Different forms of communication are very limited. Most of them cannot be contacted on landline or cellphones. The contact details provided during registration are of no use as most numbers do not work when called. Home support is non-existent. Homework and projects to be completed at home are neither supervised nor monitored though IE policy and support are ongoing and honoured by teachers at the school. Parents living elsewhere are not easily contactable. Mphahlele (2005) states that Inclusive Education should be appropriate for all learners with special needs in mainstream schools and education structures should provide support to all learners. There are teachers' stories of success with regard to the implementation of the IE, as mandated in the Education White Paper 6 for Special Needs Education. Neighboring schools do consult at this school as they seem to have a functional SBST.

“Poverty affects the learners in the area we are working in. Learners are not motivated enough or don’t have dreams and ambitions of becoming something one day through hard work.”
(Participant I)

Participant I associates poverty with development. Low levels of socio-economic conditions characterises the households of the learners, have an impact on their development. They are noticeably uninterested in their school work generally, especially regarding given assessment tasks to be completed. Learners do not put much effort into homework either. They do not consider learning important. Their quality of life dampens their level of commitment, Circumstances mean they cannot access certain services and resources are denied; these learners therefore do not aspire to be better educated Wanka (2014).

“Some of these learners could not cope with the curriculum content which could not address their individual needs to create spaces for their own development and career advancement opportunities. Learners do not have role models to motivate them to stay focused at school”.
(Participant F)

Participant F alludes to knowledge that learners receive in class as being beyond their understanding. The content taught is sometimes not flexible, not understood and not contextualized successfully for them to grasp easily. The school curriculum has been designed in limiting way, favouring mainly those learners who are academically capable (Louw & Wium, 2015). Furthermore, teachers state their concern that even in their local community, role models are limited as they hardly contribute to the development of the area.

“Working together as a staff and subject teachers, we give each other hope and help where possible, to rise above the conditions we experience.” (Participant G)

Participant G, however, is hopeful and positive about the circumstances; teamwork and collaboration among the staff bring resilience and the managing of the challenges is maintained. Teachers encourage and rely on each other and there is cooperation; effective teaching is offered in their inclusive classrooms. Howley, Howley and Johnson (2014) endorses participant G’s hopefulness in that there is collaboration among teachers in rural schools.

“We have learnt more about caring, how to nurture and develop young ones through each help from each other. We are now able to individualize our teaching, consult experts and understand the IE terminology” (Participant H)

Participant H confirms that there are some positives in working in a rural school, as also perceived by participant G. Both these participants sang the same song: that amidst trials and problems, they have learnt to care more about the learners in their classrooms, noting that the majority of participants are experienced teachers who have taught in the researched school for a long while. Their attention and attitudes are reflected in the success of learner’s education Islam (2012) established that the education usually presented in rural areas is coupled with pastoral care because of how teachers view their responsibilities in their inclusive classrooms.

“There has been improved teaching in terms of implementing the curriculum differentiation strategies. We have firmly established teams which enjoy good relations with teachers in all phases. Identified learners have been assessed by the team and support given. There has been an improved learner progress being observed. The school Lay Counsellor also assist with physically and abused learners. (Participant A)

Participant A praises the effort and the relationship between the teachers in their school. The team effort of the SBST and the Lay Counsellor is understood to have an impact and minimises the problems of the learners with diverse needs in the school. Learners are screened, identified and supported by being offered best of available resources. The strong relationships and cooperation in the school as a community aimed at achieving the desired goals reflect the systems set out by Wenger in CoPs Wenger (1999).

” Undoubtedly programmes offered by us have positives and negatives sides to them. Learners whose parents have cooperated and whose class teachers have followed their cases up, have shown much academic improvements. Teachers attend organized workshops and they implement suggested ideas. They do consult relevant stakeholders, such as therapists and the readily available Non-Governmental Organisations where they receive the much-needed and available assistance. Teachers coordinate and facilitate their own grade programmes, having established a working structure that suits their group of learners.” (Participant E)

Participant E as one of the SBST members touches on the support they offer as being effective in circumstances where the parent cooperates with the team or the teacher. The workshops which are organized at a school level are deemed as being helpful. They indicate that working with the NGOs and other departments, have successfully yielded good results in supporting learners with difficulties in leaning and those with diverse needs such as abuse they experience at home and within different community structures.

“Learners are not dropping out due to experiencing learning difficulties at the school. We engage them in programmes and they don’t feel discriminated or bullied by anyone. We continuously discourage labelling amongst each other in the classrooms.” (Participant C)

In this section, I wanted to understand the successes and challenges as experienced by classroom teachers in implementing IE in a rural primary school. The above responses reveal the numerous challenges that the classroom teachers and SBST members experience on a daily basis when implementing IE at their school. There are successes and positives noted from their comments. Carrington & Robinson (2006) recommend that for the schools to effectively implement the new initiatives, teachers’ attitudes, skills and knowledge have to be advanced in order for them to be able to deal with new developments or policies. It appears that contextual factors have posed many hinderance to the smooth running of IE in the school. The strained relations between parents as key role players and teachers who facilitate programmes, impacts negatively on IE implementation initiatives. The respondents unanimously pointed out the importance of organized workshops and effective workshops by experienced experts with the knowledge and understanding of rural contexts.

(iii) Challenges in providing inclusive education

Attempts to access the extent of teachers’ knowledge of the IE policy and the current developments since its inception and implementation were made. Most teachers acknowledged their understanding of the policy and that it is fully implemented at all levels at their school. Both classroom teachers and members of the SBST clearly articulated their non-discriminatory practices against any learner who seeks admission at their school regardless of any condition or disability.

Workshops, however are limited and there is no follow through. In cases where workshops are provided, the quality of these workshops is poor and of no value or assistance to the teacher in dealing with learners with special needs.

Teachers say that:

“Yes, the school implement the policy because we admit learners of different abilities. We implement it even in the classroom.” (Participant H)

Participant H demonstrated an awareness of IE as referred by the Department of Education, the government gazette and in the Education White Paper 6, Special Needs Education which is according to Mphahlele (2005), covers that Inclusive Education should include all learners with special educational needs and with diverse needs in the mainstream schools and additional support should be provided for all learners.

“We have lay counsellors. We cater for learners with special needs. When a learner has problems, teachers come up with strategies to help. We attend meetings and workshops arranged by the DBST.” (Participant G)

“Yes, the school implements the IE through SBST.” (Participant I)

Participant G and participant, I both understand that all public-school teachers feel obliged to conform to policies as regulated by the Department of Education. They share similar sentiments regarding observing a non-discriminatory attitude when treating all learners admitted to their school. Their conceptual understanding of the policy requirements was extended to the level of support provisions In-Service Education and Training (INSET) workshops at school level, with reference to different roles and responsibilities of the staff members.

“Yes, every teacher in a school is obliged to implement IE since the release of White Paper 6. At our school we admit all learners regardless of colour, barriers or creed. We understand that IE requires that schools should cater for all learners including those with disabilities and differences.

When we implement our curriculum as well we differentiate; topics are taught at different levels which are suitable for different learners within a grade.” (Participant A)

Participant A stressed the understanding of policies and practices of IE. Teachers seem to understand what aspects of IE they should concentrate on when implementing inclusivity at school level. Teaching approaches and curriculum differentiation are among the highlighted changes needed to implement and adapt to the new laws effectively.

“Yes, learners are not marginalised or discriminated against any condition in this school. We do admit them regardless of their status. We have the SBST in the school as a support structure that design and inform teachers on how to facilitate and support learners in the teaching and learning process.” (Participant D)

From Participant D’s response it is clearly understood that learners feel welcomed and do not feel isolated at school. The SBST is concluded as a structure which provides needed support using supportive procedures which are at their disposal as a school. It is necessary that the SBST, as a structure; gets provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties. With proper training, teachers could have confidence to consult, seek and accept support given.

“As long as the individual learner meets the requirements for the grade entry we admit them. There are foreigners in the school which substantiate that we don’t discriminate. Physically-challenged learners can be admitted as well, even though the infrastructure at the school doesn’t fully support such learners. In such cases a parent has to consent to the admission of the learner even under these unfavourable circumstances. We could even admit white learner applicants.” (Participant B)

Participant B alluded to the guidelines and preparations needed to address the problems and how the policy is implemented. The success of the IE relies mainly on clear expectations of the policy. Teachers are aware that learners admitted at school have different needs; they have to offer support and nourish their skills, talents and potentials in them to achieve academically for a better future. Parents’ involvement in supporting learners is emphasized.

“White Paper 6 clearly states the admission guidelines of this population of learner at schools. As a school we conform to the Bill of Rights as enshrined in the South African Constitution and the South African Schools Act.” (Participant C)

Drawing from the above views, it appears that contextual factors pose a major hinderance not only to the smooth running of IE in the school, but also the dilemma faced by the SBST in addressing challenges of supporting identified learners. Classroom teachers who are faced with children who have social problems are unable to assist as they don't know what and how to offer help; they lack suitable skills to deal with problems such as abuse or violence. The Lay Counsellor and the intervention strategies by the SBST resolve the problems. The strained relationship between parents as key role players and the school to facilitate programme co-ordination further impacts negatively on IE implementation initiatives. The SBST vent their frustrations because they cannot adequately fulfil their duties to their satisfaction without the guardians consent or that of the parents. This attitude delays certain planned processes. The respondents unanimously pointed out the importance of organized and effective intervention by the DBE to deal with undesirable conditions affecting learners and thus contribute to the futility of the implementation of the IE. Experienced experts with knowledge and understanding of rural contexts should support implementers. Furthermore, adequate and relevant resource distribution was perceived as key to addressing the identified challenges in rural settings.

4.5 Theme 2: The nature and function of the SBST for inclusive education

In response to the establishment of the SBST, participants revealed that the majority of the members were selected mainly because of the number of years working with diverse learners. In addition, participants stated that the selection of additional team members was either because they volunteered or because of their experience or in response to a plea made by the principal on behalf of the department, to serve in this team. The duties of the SBST are to identify site-specific learners, teacher and institutional needs and to co-ordinate efforts to address difficulties within individual schools (Johnson 1998, p.163).

i. How is the SBST constituted

The staff members of the SMT are by virtue of their positions mandated to chair different committee portfolios in the team. The principal is mentioned as an overseer of all the activities of the committees. He/she is the chairperson of the committee. It was evident from the participants' responses that the SBST members were those teachers who demonstrated certain character traits which included caring, sympathy, empathy love and kindness towards learners.

“Fortunately, most people who serve in the SBST have some kind of expertise, full dedication and commitment but not trained to deal with learners experiencing difficulties to learning.”
(Participant G)

Participant G stated that the members were dedicated and committed to help teachers and learners in their inclusive classrooms in order to bring about better performance by improving learner achievement in their learning activities. The SBST team rely on workshops offered by the DBST to sharpen their support skills. Regular workshops and seminars delivered by the DBE will enhance the team's skills in order to be able to function successfully.

“In the intermediate phase (IP) we have experienced members who have been in the teaching field for quite some time. My sister in the IP as well as a lay counsellor volunteered to serve in the committee because of their skills, qualifications and experiences.” (Participant H)

Participant H, emphasize their trust placed on those who are experienced, who have been dealing with different learners for quite some time. Some teachers volunteered to belong to the SBST. They are members because of the skills they possess, experience and professional teaching qualifications, all developed over time but with no formal training in IE.

“As far as I know, there are SMT members who chair in different committees. There are also teachers from different phases in all the teams, as subject specialists, and if need be, they include other experts in different fields according to individual problems of the learners.” (Participant I)

Participant I confirmed that the SBST members had no formal training in what they were doing. They sometimes ask assistance from the government's sister departments so as to tap into their expertise or to intervene in some identified cases. All phases at the school have members in the team who represent them. Collaboration and good relationships among the phase teachers strengthen the working relationship required to achieve their desired dreams and outcomes together as a community in the school.

“I hold a portfolio in the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) as an SMT member. My portfolio has 9 key areas. I need more time so as to be able to take care of many things such as school functionality, school safety, policies and time tabling, among others. Time is an issue in managing all the duties as I am responsible for subjects in different classes”. (Participant D)

Participant D, as an SMT member and who also confidently chairs the committee of one of the portfolios within the SBST, acknowledges added responsibilities which are brought by the establishment of the structure at a school level. SMT members have many roles to play including supervising and monitoring the curriculum and at the same time, they are ordinary subject teachers.

“As a member of the SBST, my role is mainly to responsibly lead committees. They report all the activities of their committees to me. They consult me now and again and I sometimes make recommendations and additions to the suggested programmes. Most of the time I use my experience gained over years as a teacher and knowledge from one day or few hours workshops I have attended organized by the district”. (Participant A)

“I am a member of the Teacher Support committee, as a Math co-Ordinator in the Foundation Phase (FP). I assist teachers with developing strategies of how to deal with learners who have math problems. I am full time class teacher, some engagements of being a member disturb the plans of the day”. (Participant E)

Participant A and E are fully aware of what functions and roles they play by being members of the SBST. District workshops are conducted but they are insufficient as they take place over few days

or take some form of briefing held during the day. Participant E is committed but it the SBST duties interferes with the classroom routine, especially in the phase where she is placed.

“It was just a mandate from the DBE that HODs or senior teachers should be responsible for chairing committees. I don’t quite remember how I was selected to lead the committee I am currently chairing, except that the workshop which was attended by my colleagues, stated that we chair committees. Classwork and management duties are still on the cards, no excuses.”

(Participant C)

Participant C demonstrates unhappiness about being given an order by the Department of Basic Education to rope in SMT members as chairs of the committee of the SBST. Comments made clearly point at the added load which compromise the quality of assigned duties. Roles and duties within the team are not clearer how they were allocated.

“As an additional member I was selected to help with issues in the intermediate phase. We work collaboratively with the SMT as they chair the committees. Portfolio co coordinators were identified based on their positions. I believe that I am among members with the expertise in handling learner issues related to learning but have never attended formal Inclusive training at the college and the university I attended.” (Participant J)

Participant J knows what duties he has to perform as an SBST member. He suggests his level of skills he provides as an intermediate representative is based on his exposure to dealing with learners’ problems over a number of years. Formal inclusive training is an added concern as he has no IE qualification.

The duties of the SBST are to identify specific needs of learners, teachers and those of the institution. They are then expected to coordinate efforts to address these identified needs by providing support within an individual institution (Johnson 1998, p.163). Mphahlele (2005), states that Inclusive Education would be better if all learners in a mainstream school receive the best support from skilled and well-trained staff. Furthermore, he mentions that a successful IE support should be provided by all relevant and appropriate structures. The SBST appears to be playing

their vital roles effectively. It is evident that there is a good working relationship between the phase teachers as well as between the SBST and classroom teachers at this school. Teachers who are, nominated or volunteered by virtue of their positions, implement the IE as mandated by the Education White Paper 6 despite lack of know-how and insufficient training given. Their abilities and commitment in working with learners who are experiencing difficulties is outstanding and under circumstances is successful, and that is what drive them to continue supporting IE regardless of training and loss of apprehension about what they are doing. Frustrations of added responsibilities were voiced. Heavy workloads can possibly jeopardize the implementation of the IE as promulgated by the EWP6 of 2001.

ii. Support provided by the SBST to teachers

Classroom teachers alluded to the fact that having team member as representatives of all phases, works best for their collaboration during phase or Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings where learner-support issues are discussed. On monthly staff meeting agendas, IE always forms part of the discussions where classroom teachers share progresses made and their concerns. The SBST structure is made up of three committee with different portfolios to offer needed support for the school community. They are Learner Support Committee (LSC), Teacher Support Committee (TSC) and Whole School Evaluation (WSE) committees. There is also a Quality of Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) present to support the teacher support committee as it brings about the running smoothly of the teaching and learning activities. The main purpose of the QLTC to discuss on how teaching and learning in the classroom can be improved so as to be of the best quality and thus to benefit all kinds of learners. It is also at these meetings that learners with learning difficulties are discussed.

With regard to the support provided by the SBST, the teachers say that:

“No allocated time is scheduled for meetings between the SBST and teachers except during phase meetings and Quality Learning Teaching Campaign (QLTC) meetings where classroom challenges are shared.” (Participant I)

Participant I expressed the concern about not having specific time dedicated to support. Teachers have their own platforms in different phases which include general discussion about problems encountered in the classrooms. It is during these times that learners experiencing difficulties are discussed. SBST members then give some known guidelines on how to handle diversity in their inclusive classrooms.

“Even at all these meetings, nothing comes out of the discussions because the SBST itself is unsure of the kind of support they need to give us, let alone to learners. (Participant G)

Participant G mention that the assistance they receive from SBST as teachers has no impact and is insufficient because the SBST members are not clear about how to address most issues which need intervention by them. Lack of trust is apparent; to this participant this shows a negative attitude towards the SBST as a support structure; this participant lacks confidence in the members ability to handle IE.

“There are plans for staff development in the year plan. At times we do sit down as a team and identify programmes which will benefit learners with difficulties. Our focus is mainly on learners.” (Participant C)

Participant C touches on the plans in place that provide and address problems related to IE. The plans shared drawn by the SBST members are one sided and only focus on the learners having been drafted by the Learner Support Committee (LSC) only.

“We do have teachers in different phases who belong in the SBST committee. Those are team members who help learners with learning difficulties in a particular phase. But these members do meet one in a while as a committee to review teachers’ identified learners. It happens after a query has been repeatedly put forward by a teacher who has learners with learning difficulties in the classroom and looking forward for the process to move to the next stage” (Participant D)

Participant D emphasised the minimal support provided by the SBST after the learner in question has been assisted by a teacher in the classroom. SBST members do not meet regularly. The reasons

indicated are that they are full-time class teachers and the SMT members have other administration duties on their hands.

“Focus is mainly on supporting learners in the classroom. There have also been programmes dealing with the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), where learners were helped with the uniform. In that way, their confidence and self-esteem were gained because they felt they belong to the group when using the same clothing as others. They were clean and decent.” (Participant J)

Participant J, expressed the same opinion as participant C with regard to the one-sided assistance by the SBST. The OVCs are accommodated in a way which restores their confidence and self-esteem when they receive uniforms and other essential needs. Such learners then have a sense of belonging and don't feel isolated from others. Lack of self-esteem is a barrier to learning

“There are planned developmental session for teachers which do take place in different forms. Such developments only happen when we get time. They happen mostly after we have attended a workshop, we share the knowledge we got from the workshop to update the teachers about advancements of the IE.” (Participant F)

Participant F remarks that special meetings are held with the staff for updates and developments after they have attended workshops specially organized and facilitated by the DSBT. It is during such meetings where support and other matters related to IE are discussed. Improvements are shared to keep the staff informed about the actions and up dated processes of IE.

“Regarding the Teacher Support portfolio committee, it's not functional because teachers with personal problems are directed straight to the principal by the teachers themselves; that is what they prefer. Teachers are satisfied sharing their matters with the principal privately in his office. He is flooded with everything. They make up their own time to visit his office” (Participant A)

Participant A comments on the inactive and non-functional SBST portfolio committees. The Teacher Support Committee matters are always directed to the principal and not handled by the members themselves. One concludes that IE is not exercised fully when it comes to other important aspects thereof. The SBST members are not trusted when it comes handling private and personal

matters which help teachers perform better. This reflects lack of confidence in the SBST portfolio committees.

The comments highlight the view that cooperation is notable and there is an effort made by the SBST to provide support to teachers. Support is not only provided by the SBST but also involves professionals from different sectors as they are with various skills and expertise. Gained knowledge from other experts and district officials is communicated through different platforms available as well as planned meetings at schools. At the meetings IE policies are indirectly shared, be it for the phase or subjects, that is where teachers are relaxed and are able to discuss and resolve shared problems as experienced by them in their inclusive classrooms.

It is evident, as teachers expressed themselves, that there is no time specifically allocated to provide support at the school, and the policy has no clear guidelines on when support should be provided. Everyone confirmed that they are fully engaged with their teaching duties during contact time. No time, however is set aside to fully attend to IE problems. They get time in between periods to support each other and once the teacher with an identified learner difficulty approaches the committee or anyone of the team members for additional support after some processes have been started.

iii. Challenges faced by the SBST and their responses to these challenges

This section focuses on the challenges as experienced by the SBST when providing and applying support to teachers as per needs or as per advancement with the processes. Teachers, in their responses specified that challenges do not diminish; they always pop up, even when on the verge of solving the problem. They listed various challenges experienced, attempts made to address them but there were other challenges which were beyond their level of understanding that could not be handled by a person with no formal IE training.

“Yes, we do learn from the team. But the workshops or training that we get from them are not as frequent as they should be. The school-based workshops are few. Even the workshops provided for the team and facilitated by the district, are not enough given the number of experienced problems

and the expected support preferred with more professional information from the experts.’
(Participant G)

Participant G maintains that workshops or training to equip the SBST with skills and knowledge to handle and address inclusion problems are insufficient. With minimal support from the department or through the DBST, confidence in providing support is neither operative nor effective. Workshops or seminars on inclusivity should be held on regular basis so that positive reinforcement is given where necessary.

“The learners themselves need to be motivated and counselled as well. In higher grades, some learners become embarrassed when given individual attention or different activities from the rest of the group. They come up with excuses of incomplete work. I run out of ideas on how to handle other matters because of partial IE knowledge” (Participant H)

Participant H raises issues related to learners who feel embarrassed if they are singled out. In addition, participant H therefore raises the need for on-going support in order to keep the motivation levels of learners high.

“Working alone is too demanding and frustrating when very limited assistance is received from the team. When I need them, they are sometimes unavailable because they are either in class or busy with their managerial duties and then you end up having to deal with that problem on your own.” (Participant I)

Participant I pointed to the frustrations of seeking support from the constituted structure because of their lack of availability due to their normal daily activities. Inclusion would work best if the SBST is structured properly to offer support to learners in mainstream schools. Members are overloaded with class duties and some members have extra duties as they are SMT members.

“Teachers do improvise and come up with alternative means to help learners, but the unavailability of appropriate resources and infrastructure hinders such attempts of support they wish to provide to learner needs. There are no relevant resources to help learners with different learning

styles who require special learning and teaching unique material to support different learning.”
(Participant J)

Participant J clearly expressed the concern of adequate and suitable resources. The focus was on physical facilities and proper teaching and learning material that were not readily available at school. Material resources promote learning and can effectively make life easier for the SBSTs. They can hand over to classroom teachers who have identified learners with specific needs. Furniture, stationery and appropriate teaching material are essential for the SBST members to have at their disposal in order to support IE. Private offices to discuss matters and problems which are confidential are not available this creates problems for the SBSTs. Learners with physical disabilities are not well accommodated as school facilities do not necessarily cater for them. Insufficient and appropriate infrastructure causes challenges for the SBST in supporting such needs if beyond the school’s budget and if not provided by the DBE.

“Parents are defensive to recommendations proposals by the teachers when informed of the identified learning challenges experienced by their children. For example, a teacher in the Foundation Phase suggested that the parents purchase an abacus for their kids. Their response was very negative and gave excuses to such calls. The area that we work in is invaded by squatters which has an impact of how they view suggestions given by teachers.” (Participant D)

Participant D indicated that parents were sometimes in denial about accepting that their children were experiencing difficulties to learning. Identified barriers can be regarded as temporary or as the plot emanating from witchcraft, as according to some parents. The team and teachers have to convince the parents the need for support and to release some background information about the learner for the process of support to continue. Denial by parents is problematic especially during the early school years of the learner and it delays the process and application needed for support at an early stage. Perceptions about not accepting learning difficulties a child experiences, can go as far as changing schools or requesting to change the teacher because of information passed on to the parents. The possibility of the learning difficulty a child may have is denied mostly by parents of learners in the Foundation Phase. Denial can thus affect the child’s entire future education.

“Time factor is of great concern, there is no specified time scheduled. As a subject teacher and a manager, I have a lot to do. Meetings during contact time are disturbing and are unmonitored where learners misbehave and end up creating more problems of fights and bullying” (Participant B)

Participant B echoed complaint about minimal time being available to multi-task. The SBST are under pressure to complete their work schedule for the year as subject teachers and at the same they monitor and supervise the curriculum of the phases they lead. They are then expected to successfully chair one of the portfolio committees of the SBST.

“Overcrowded classrooms in intermediate and senior phases make early identifications in the first two terms difficult for teachers. Paper work is another thorny issue, teachers complain of spending too much time completing documents which require a lot of information as evidence of support given.” (Participant C)

Participant C brought up the complaint about overcrowding in certain phases. As the numbers are big, it not easy to identify learners with problems early. Individualization is not possible and attention is on the work scheduled for the year. Only those who can grasp the learning content easily keep up with the conventional style of teaching employed by the teacher. Learners who are in need are neglected and left behind. Some learners do not have the required stationery to start off the year; this delays identification of learning problems of learners in the inclusive classroom. Eliminating all possible hinderances is important. Overcrowding also challenges effective teaching, so more learners experience difficulties in learning. Adjusting to the new environment in bigger classes with more learners can have an impact on learners. Big classes can compromise planned teaching and learning activities. Teachers cannot timeously identify, support and refer learners for additional support if there are too many learners in one classroom. Targets for providing support at a specific time often cannot be met by the SBST. Reports and statistics can have gaps when compiled as some learners may not have been identified or supported in time as per the school development plan.

There were concerns expressed about lack of parental involvement which aggravates poor levels of illiteracy and also ignorance. Working in rural areas is perceived as a challenge because of adverse of socio-economic conditions and perceptions held by parents about inclusivity and

learning problems which in turn negatively impact on education in South Africa in general on implementing IE in particular.

From the above responses, there is a consensus that the SBST is functional at the school according to the regulations of the DoE (DoE 2002, p 46). The school as a community shares common goals in recognition and implementation of the IE policies by supporting learners with learning difficulties. The SBST team steers the activities in different portfolio committees to achieve acceptable learner performance in their school. In the case of this particular school, it appears that working together as a community assist in solving the identified problems. Their regular interactions make up to be a sociable community (Wenger, 1999). Working as a community, engaging in planning activities, makes it possible for the team to provide the much-needed learner support. As the participating school staff highlighted collaborative engagements which impacted positively when addressing the challenges experienced in their classrooms through these above structures. There were also concerns expressed about the kinds of support that are provided as well as the response time. Due to accountability and the demands of teaching and learning, support by the SBST is limited. Being a rural school also compromises the extent to which the SBST can deliver on its mandate. Its access to needed services is restricted because of its location, travel and availability of time hence, while the SBST has a working relationship which is good with the school community, considering the environment, the extent of support offered is superficial, as the next theme will allude to.

4.6 Theme 3: Teachers' experiences of support received from the SBST

The SBST's core duties are regarded as being valuable because members are responsible for empowering teachers to develop preventative and appropriate strategies to address specific learning difficulties and learning barriers in their classrooms. The team is expected to treat all learners as equals at school, regardless of their impairments and all cases identified should be considered significant. The proper constituted team should involve the SMT members and other stakeholders with expertise; who can provide guidance to teachers on how to support learners who are experiencing difficulties to learning at the school. Sethosa (2001, p. 12) states that The School Based Support Teams in South African schools should include the School Management Teams (SMTs) and other field specific experts, such as psychologists who

have the knowledge and understanding of developmental milestones of humans. The team at the school always attempts to ensure that the culture of teaching and learning is observed without any prejudice towards learners with learning difficulties. Anticipation of receiving training in curriculum differentiation, constant monitoring and resource provisions in order to meet the needs of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning is expected and shortcomings detailed with clarity.

This is evident from the following statements:

“A two-day departmental training or workshop without follow ups for me is not enough to assist us and be able deal with the learners’ challenges in class. There have been no visits by the DBST to monitor our progress; as a result, we do not know if we are doing the things accordingly.”

(Participant H)

Participant H makes reference to the workshops that are conducted by the DBST as being inadequate. The department’s intervention in assisting the SBST is simply insufficient.

“There is no parental involvement, and I feel we are fighting a losing battle here. Parents are confused and frustrated as well because they feel ashamed and more often than not are ignorant of the learning problems displayed by their children. They have shifted their responsibilities to teachers to perform miracles with their children. Even when the parent has been notified about the learning problem or barrier, they show no concern, hoping that the teacher will solve the problem or it diminish with time.” (Participant I)

Participant I perceived parents as being misinformed about learning barriers, diversity and difficulties to learning. When the teacher or the SBST member has identified the need which requires the involvement of the parents, parents come up with excuses for the barrier or plead that they are illiterate and cannot be of assistance. When parents are called to school to collaborate in order to support the learner, they do not honor such calls. They do not understand that they can make a difference and more improvements can be attained. They trust teachers to do brilliant things in supporting learners without them assisting. Support which the learners receive at home from parents and guardians can contribute greatly to a learner’s performance.

“The SBST should share more and more skills with us on how we can address the learning problems we have already identified in our classrooms. They need to work with us first before consulting with other stakeholders, because as it is, everyone is doing their own thing. We work in silos. We do not have proper directions or guidelines that we can follow. We are simply doing what we think is right for the child and yet we fail because there is no evidence of progress in class for these learners. We are really frustrated.” (Participant G)

Participant G wanted more assistance from the SBST than what they were receiving. They are concerned about proper guidelines, about providing support which is not shared or is not known. Conversely, classroom teachers have confidence in themselves. They consider themselves essential in the support process as they spend more time observing learners in the classroom. They gauge their knowledge as vital. Because of time spent with learners, they can create a positive learning environment in the classrooms for learners to be productively engaged as individuals and as groups. This participant believes that collaboration of stakeholders can strengthen the support. To ease the difficulties, role players involved in support provision should work together better.

“Detailed procedures on how to conduct Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) have been given out to teachers as handouts. We have managed to facilitate some workshops with the teachers on the SIAS process but time constraints have hindered proper monitoring on our side. Some referrals have been done, while others are still awaiting relevant documentation from parents.” (Participant A)

Participant A expressed satisfaction with a good job done as a SBST member in supporting teachers. This was specifically referred to the case of the SIAS processes and how referrals are done. He believed that teachers were pleased with the progress and advancements of IE in the school, especially with the responsibilities of the SBST, which are considered done to their best of their capabilities. In addition, the support that they can provide is valued as they share what have learnt from the DBST. The SBST plan and present workshops at the school afford teachers the chance to obtain crucial knowledge they need in the support process.

“We are assured that we are not alone; the SBST understand and acknowledge our efforts in helping learners, especially with regard to support and working in a school with limited resources.” (Participant E)

Participant E alluded to the acknowledgements they receive from the team members about the efforts demonstrated in helping learners who are experiencing difficulties to learning. Improvisation of teaching and learning material is appreciated since the school has insufficient resources to enhance IE and coordinate support activities. Being with the SBST full time at school strengthens their relationships and eases the tension as they are swimming in the same pond.

“The team gives counselling to abused learners. The lay counsellor helps the teachers in supporting those learners who cannot talk about problems that they encounter which impacts on their poor academic performance or not at an expected level/standard.” (Participant F)

Participant F confirmed that the different roles played by the SBST were vital. Their experiences of the team interventions with barriers to learning were appreciated. The experiences of working with learners for a long period of time are acknowledged as beneficial since it assists in helping learners who have been abused. Despite being aware that the team does not receive formal remedial support training in their years of initial teacher education, their skills are considered valuable and supportive to improving barriers to learning.

“We are also provided with general knowledge of IE and the its benefits for learners performance in general as individuals and to the overall school results improvements in particular. We are exposed to personnel with expertise in the field of learner support and other crucial aspects of the learners’ growth. There is an ongoing support from the school management for teachers in need. They apply an open-door policy. We are encouraged to attend district workshop invitations on IE.” (Participant B)

Participant B alluded to what participant B touched on when realising and recognising the efforts of the SBST within the school. The progress may only be slightly noticeable but teachers acknowledge efforts contributed by their team at school level. Challenges are more noticeable when trying to access help which is supposed to be provided by district or provincial officials. In-house workshops are conducted, which informs teachers of the current issues and developments

with regards to IE. Responses from the participants confirmed the existence of the SBST and its valuable role at the school.

Teachers are seen as being in need of the support provided by the SBST at a school level and by the DBST at a district level. They mentioned that despite having an established SBST at the school, which is perceived as functional, there is only partial progress, or few improvements, in addressing the IE challenges and effectively supporting learners with learning difficulties and having appropriate facilities that accommodate all types of needs. What can be seen as of minimal differences as well as what intensifies the challenges, is the fact that the SBST's remedial support skills and knowledge is informal; they rely mostly on their teaching experience. Teachers are also concerned about a shortage of ongoing support from the district officials, the DBST or the Special Needs Education services (SNES) directorate at a provincial level.

The DBST specialists' support is virtually non-existent Porter (2000, p. 68) in his study states that teachers are in possession of minimal knowledge in providing direct and effective support to other teachers. Teachers rely on these structures which provide them with appropriate strategies on how to help learners with barriers and those experiencing difficulties to learning in the classroom. Their concern is about competent skills needed to offer appropriate support with greater confidence. After the SBSTs have been trained, or have attended workshops, it is necessary to share the gained information with the teachers. Both classroom teachers and the SBST share similar concerns about the slow pace in achieving the desired outcomes by getting useful knowledge in order to successfully help learners who have difficulties in learning. They all lamented absence of regular workshops and not receiving updated information timeously to increase and improve their own knowledge of IE. Teachers recognized the importance of consistent and effective monitoring of the processes of SIAS and timely referrals. Supervision from both the district personnel and the SBST is important in order to bring about change and achieve the objectives of the EWP6 of 2001.

4.7 Key findings of the study

The findings of the study confirm Wenger's theory of CoPs. The theory alludes to the need of forming communities of practice for the development of the vision and opinions of a particular society. The CoP is a process which mainly focuses on quality achievement of the interested members of the community who are ready to resolve a problem with their expertise that they

possess. In Chapter 2 Wenger's theory of practice was introduced by referring to the necessity of different stakeholders or role players of the education to form a sound relationship with the idea of achieving the quality results in the implementation of the Inclusion Policy as presented by the Education White Paper 6 of 2001. The Inclusive Education policy have guidelines on how support for all learners in the mainstream schools can be provided. The findings of this study discovered that the SBST has various needs in order to efficiently execute their responsibilities and their duties.

The findings also noted the need for members to work as a community through active participation and improved communication to achieve the best results when offering support in the inclusive classroom framework. By making use of available resources and facilities to support learners in the school, the SBST s effort, together with that of classroom teachers and interested stakeholders, will be effective. Sound relationships and regular participation in the CoP can lead to improved teaching and learning so that outcomes can be accomplished and thus IE goals can be achieved. Parents, NGOs, and departmental officials ought to collaborate in supporting the mainstream schools so that learners can improve in their achievements academically, regardless of barriers.

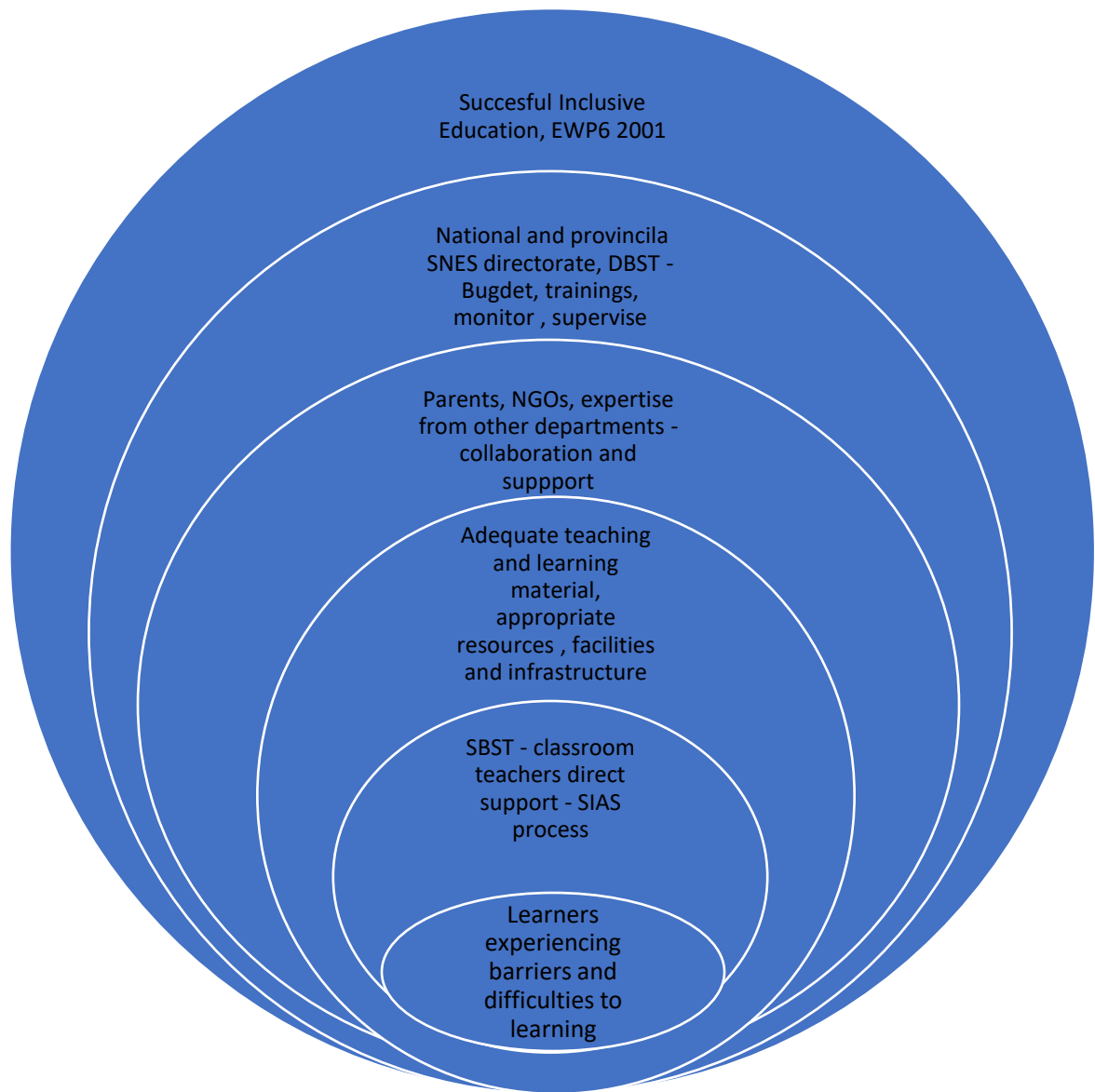


Figure 4: Summary of the findings in terms of the CoP theory

4.8 Findings of the study according to themes:

Theme 1: Challenges faced by school within the context of rurality and Inclusive Education

From the findings of the study, there are a number of factors which relate to the context of the school of this primary school and which influence the implementation of Inclusive Education. The school has learners who are from poverty-stricken backgrounds. Such learners do suffer since they

cannot access certain basic needs. Rural schools are disadvantaged institutions. They face challenges in different spheres of schooling such as overcrowding in classes, parents with different experiences and opinions when their children have been identified by teachers as having barriers or difficulty to learning. Moreover, resources are not sufficient to promote teaching and learning in the classroom.

Theme 2: The nature and functions of the School Based Support Team for Inclusive Education

From the findings of the study it was noted the SBSTs have a significance role performing their duties and roles as a team. Members of the team are mindful of what functions and roles they play as members belongingness in the team of the SBST is important. Looking at the profile of the SBST, most of the members are qualified in the teaching profession and have wide experience of teaching in a main stream school. Their experience dates back to before Inclusive Education was introduced by the Department of Education. All teachers have experience in working collaboratory as community members of the school. This experience is confirmed by volunteering themselves to be committee members of the SBST and by being nominated by other staff members at staff meetings. This confirms their suitability for overseeing the proper planning of activities of the school. The team experience displayed their level of commitment to serve learners as they are still working for the Department of Basic Education. Their active participation and working together as a team in providing support has made it possible for the team to implement IE to their level best, amidst the challenges based on The Department of Education in White Paper 6 of 2001, which give guidelines on how schools can collaborate and form the support teams at school level. The team's efforts to provide support to learners who are experiencing barriers to learning is hindered by the limited resources at their disposal due to the location in a rural area. Their work as members assistance of support as the SBST members is characterised by commitment which has led to a good working relationship with other stakeholders who have an interest in collaboration with the schools by offering services regarding their fields of specialisation.

Theme 3: Teachers' experiences of support received from the School Based Support Team

From the findings of the study, it is evident that with appropriate support, competent skills and appropriate knowledge, the SBST can efficiently implement Inclusive Education and teachers and learners will benefit from the valuable process. The ongoing participation and collaboration of the SBST with the classroom teachers can improve and enhance Inclusive Education at this rural primary school. The Theory of CoP is beneficial to the process of assisting learners who experience difficulties to learning environments. The SBST has experienced the lack of assistance from the DBST and officials at the provincial level but with the collaboration and the trust among the staff at the school, teachers are all committed in attaining the vision of helping learners who have been admitted to this rural primary school. Some parents do not cooperate adequately and that this undermines efforts as a community to provide support to learners and teachers. The SBST members actively practices inclusion activities and provides additional support to teachers and learners. Wenger (1999) regards CoP as a group of people who share mutual goals, experiences and understandings.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, data from the interviews has been presented and analysed. Rich data were provided derived from all those who were participants that were interviewed in the study. I had interviewed ten teachers from an identified rural primary school, focusing on teacher experiences with regard to the SBST support offered at the school. Participants acknowledged the role of the SBST as being functional and active but experienced challenges. Challenges encountered by the SBST in the school, do slowly hinder performance of their duties and functions and thus cause dismay regarding the implementation of Inclusive Education.

Validation of data was done by gathering information through individual and focus group interviews. Findings in the study indicated the challenges teachers faced in a rural primary school when supporting learners with learning difficulties and barriers learning due to contextual factors and pressures caused by adverse working conditions. They expressed their disappointment in the

lack of sufficient remedial knowledge and teaching and learning material is not specific for additional support for the identified problems. Parental involvement and their limited cooperation also affect the process of SIAS. There was also an outcry about lack of time specifically allocated for SBST support activities. Little guidance, monitoring and supervision from the district officials was regarded as major draw backs to effective IE implementation. The findings of the study also reflected positive aspects as well as challenges in the roles of the SBST in a rural primary school. Teachers are willing to participate in the IE policies and have shown to be part of the SBST support programmes, based on their experiences, interests and on the needs of the learners. Secondly, despite receiving minimal support from the SBST in terms of dealing with learners' issues, they rely much on their insights what would work best for them to assist learners in need. Thirdly, while the SIAS process is limited within the school, the level of interest in working and finding solutions to learners' problem is high and sustained, suggesting that if more external support is provided, more can be done to support teachers and learners within the IE school. Fourthly, despite parents not being helpful in dealing with learners' challenges at home, they continue to give support by providing needed information with perseverance, i.e. they don't just give up – hence a huge level of resilience amongst teachers to provide the needed support for learners is evident, despite the rural challenges that they are very familiar with in their community.

Challenges which are encountered by the SBST in a rural school can be minimized if external support is strengthened by the departmental officials and other interested stakeholders' engagements. The CoP as explained by Wenger could be fully functional. The final chapter of this study discusses the detailed findings and suggests recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the summary of findings relating to the experiences of the SBST members and classroom teachers with the view to explore how teaching and learning takes place within an Inclusive Education framework in a rural school. Furthermore, the chapter focuses on some of the limitation of the study and, finally, presents some recommendations that are made based on findings of the study.

5.1.1 Review of research questions

The aim of the study was to answer the following questions,

- How are the SBSTs constituted in a rural primary school and what do they understand about their role in providing support to teachers?
- What support do teachers need when teaching within an inclusive education framework in a rural primary school?
- What support is provided by the SBST to teachers within the inclusive framework in classrooms at a rural primary school?
- What are teachers' classroom experiences in teaching learners with barriers to learning in their classrooms?

The research questions were answered both theoretically, as in chapter two, and empirically, as in chapters three and four. The interviews were used to collect needed data and then analysed in an effort to answer research questions and to achieve the objectives of the study.

5.1.2 Revisiting the theoretical framework

Wenger's communities of practice theory (CoP) focuses on a dedicated group of people with a collective interest and who on a regular basis meet to learn and improve something (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The communities of practice theory in the study provided me with the lens through which the experiences of teachers influence working relationships in a school. The SBST builds trusted relationships with each other, as members of the staff, with the aim of helping learners who are experiencing difficulties in learning. Teachers in this Embo school, shared unique knowledge, expertise and experience related to support when resolving problems regarding learners who are experiencing difficulties in learning. They began the journey of working together as a community with the view to assist those in need. The school community was formed jointly, met on a regular basis, and shared views and expertise cascaded down from departmental officials, NGOs and other sister departments of the government with an interest in attaining the goal of improving the IE situation. In using Wenger's CoP, the common purpose of the SBST has been attained. The team's main involvements to provide additional support to the school community of teachers through sharing of ideas, experiences, challenges and failures was reached – while this happens in an unstructured way, but considering the workload of teachers, the timetable of their academic programme and the lack of parental support, this unstructured and unplanned meetings and support provided by the SBST are very useful to teachers.

Wenger and Trayner p. 3 (2015) attest to the examples of the processes of the communities of practice as below:

Communities can develop their common practice through a variety of activities.

- Problem solving: “Can we work on this design and brainstorm some ideas; I’m stuck.”
- Requests for information: “Where can I find the information or resources to solve the problem?”
- Seeking experience: “Has anyone dealt with such a situation?”
- Coordination and synergy: “Can we combine our ideas to achieve best results?”
- Building an argument: “How do people in other countries do this? Armed with this information it will be easier to convince my Ministry to make some changes.”

- Growing confidence: “Before I do it, I’ll run it through my community first to see what they think.”
- Discussing developments: “What do you think of the new system? Does it really help?”
- Documenting projects: “We have faced this problem five times now. Let us write it down once and for all.”
- Visits: “Can we come and see your after-school program? We need to establish one in our city.”
- Mapping knowledge and identifying gaps: “Who knows what, and what are we missing? With what other groups should we connect?”

The above are examples of activities which can be explored by the classroom teachers, SBSTs, DBSTs and other relevant stakeholders when engaging with each other in trying to offer assistance to the learner’s experiences learning difficulties in a rural primary school.

5.1.3 Summary of findings

To summarise the findings of the research, I reflected on the research questions and the purpose of the study.

There were both challenges and successes that arose from the findings and these are summarized in this section. It appears from the findings that the SBST model has a number of weaknesses. The SBST members have to provide support during the teaching time. There is no allocated time set aside for them to address learners’ needs. They have to find extra time to chair meetings and provide support since they are full-time subject teachers. The SBST, comprise of SMT members, who are already overloaded because of their tasks based on job descriptions. HODs monitor and supervise their respective phase teaching and learning activities. The DBE’s requirement of departmental heads to chair portfolio committees is an added task on them. Overloading managers with responsibilities of the IE, does lessen the focus on the successful implementation of the EWP6 as well as its purpose. Teachers are hampered when they need service and assistance from the SBST and cannot access them because these team members are sometimes committed to their managerial duties or teaching in their classrooms. This crowded arrangement at a school level is

not practical as it benefits neither teachers nor learners who need additional support from the SBST.

Further concerns teachers mentioned with regard to reporting or making referrals of the identified learners: The SIAS procedure was interpreted as being a process which was owing to too much paperwork. Teachers also expressed concerns about policies which were designed as ‘one size fits all’ because they do not consider schools’ real situations and backgrounds, especially when referring to teachers’ and learners’ complexities encountered in rural schools. Teachers were worried about the district programmes or provincial follow-up dates which they believe were supposed to be regular so as to provide needed skills and knowledge. District officials’ workshops were provided inconsistently and were regarded as insufficient. There was a dire necessity for sustained and comprehensive training for support courses which should run over a period of time, infusing all the essential aspects of inclusion and clearly unpacking the vital IE information for teachers for the sake of better implementation. Primary classroom teachers trust that Inclusion is not something that can be learnt quickly in one or two workshops and have confidence to effectively implement. With the current level of training, teachers did not feel confident enough to provide quality support or assistance regarding various needs in their classrooms.

Parents: Parental involvement was regarded as minimal at this rural primary school. There were many factors which led to the parents’ minimal participation in the school activities when asked to help with their children’s school work. Most parents in the area were unemployed and those who were working, most of them worked away from work. It was a poverty-stricken area many children were in the loving care of their grandmothers. Parents of learners were often in denial about the challenges as they did not want to accept their child’s condition nor the situation. Parents had different beliefs about their children when they have been alerted as being with barriers which affect their children’s learning and progress. Some parents believed that their children would outgrow the condition or it was the work of the supernatural forces and they would eventually begin to perform better once attended traditionally.

Overcrowding was confirmed by the classroom teachers as an impediment to teaching the two phases, i.e. intermediate and senior phase where there were large numbers of learners in these

groups. Teachers were unable to give individual attention; thus, it took time for them to identify learners who were experiencing difficulties to learning.

Collaboration among the teachers and the SBST members was observed and confirmed in the interviews. Minimum teamwork and effort by the DBST and the department of education were commented on.

Resources were clearly a significant problem. The resources were inadequate in relation to teaching and learning material and facilities, also teachers did not appropriate skills and knowledge on how to support effectively.

Time was another factor which was commented on as one factor which affected the implementation of the IE policy and its visions. The SBST, as the structure operating at a school level had no allocated sessions to provide additional support to teachers and learners in an inclusive educational classroom framework. Over and above IE matters, they had to attend to numerous everyday duties and responsibilities as teachers.

5.2. Themes that emerged from the study

5.2.1 Theme 1: Challenges faced by the school within the context of rurality and inclusive education

(i) Being a rural school

Poverty and socio-economic conditions where the school is situated caused difficulties for the SBST. Parents were not accessible with the required information. Some were not well informed, believing that their information would be shared with other departments which would somehow lead to them losing the support grant.

(ii) Challenges as experienced by the school

Resources for implementing the IE were insufficient. Teaching and learning aids, facilities and well-trained teachers were the frequently mentioned as problems. Teachers improvised in order to assist the learners who had been identified with barriers.

(iii) Challenges as experienced by the teachers

At the interviews it was mentioned that many parents did not show much concern about their children's education. Participants reported concerns that younger parents and grandparents did not display sufficient responsibility towards their children's work. Stationery and books recommended to enhance learners learning in class, were not bought on time. Tasks and activities given as homework for enrichment and to expanded opportunities were not well monitored by parents. Intermediate and senior phases were overcrowded, which makes it difficult to reach and support learners effectively.

(iv) Challenges in providing inclusive education

Participants conveyed their understanding of the Education White Paper 6, as a government policy. They commented that the policy was honoured and implemented in their school. Admission of learners regardless of their conditions was done. Teachers acknowledged that the establishment of the SBST was also considered as a way of conforming to the requirements of the policy. The SBST members mentioned that they had good working relationships with other teachers within the school. The classroom teachers, however said that the assistance was minimal due to SBST members being subject teachers, the support provided, did not have a great impact and learners were not supported fully as per their identified needs.

Participants indicated challenges in the implementation of the IE as a whole. They specifically referred to the lack of remedial/ support skills and knowledge of the SBST members possess. Teaching and learning resources were not available when there was a need for adequate additional support but they despite all the encountered challenges, they remained positive as a school and they would accept and continue accommodate learners with difficulties to learning. They stated that they were at least managing to provide the required low-level support as expected by the guidelines on EWP6.

5.2.2 Theme 2: The nature and function of the SBST regarding Inclusive Education

(i) How the SBST is constituted

Teachers responses around the establishment of, and composition of the SBST was consistent. SBST members comprised both voluntary and mandatory groups of people. Teachers who volunteered were experienced and had been working with children in the teaching profession for a long time. The SMT members were obligated to be members of the support team because of their management positions. Chairing of different committees by the SMT is based on involvement, knowledge and skills in that particular portfolio. The departmental policy was consulted when the team was constituted. The principal was mentioned as a person who diligently chaired the school's IE structure and he fully supported all the committee's activities for effective IE implementation. Parents, sister departments, NGOs and all other external stakeholders who had an interest in the school were easily accessed by the SBST for their expertise and knowledge. The consultations with other stakeholders greatly enhanced the roles and responsibilities of the SBST to ensure the competency of the team. The team pointed on by emphasising the minimal involvement of the parents when information and monitoring of a task was needed.

(ii) Support provided by SBST to teachers

The SBST members are not confident about performing their duties. They relied on providing general knowledge as per their experience as long-serving teachers. They sometimes referred the identified learners to the DBST whom they believed had more expertise and have additional remedial knowledge. Workshops attended by the SBST and those conducted as feedback by the SBST at a school had some little impact, when disseminating and sharing of relevant information and implementing appropriate interventions ideas.

(iii) Challenges faced by the SBST members and responses to these challenges

The DBST was mentioned as the structure which gave insufficient assistance to the school. The SBST members expressed disappointments as monitoring was not carried out by the district official. They consequently worked on their own without help. Referrals were their main

concern after learners had been identified. The resource centres were not of great help as they were not close to the school thus the SBST was unable to make use of available facilities.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Teachers' experiences of support received from the SBST

It appears that the rural context was overwhelming for the teachers coping with the daily demands of supporting the learners and teachers in a rural primary school. The SBST alone is not in a position to deal with some of the concerns raised by the teachers. The findings indicated that teachers needed some training, better skills and resources which were relevant in this context. Referrals were not directly followed up by district officials and progress was not evident. Workshops (held infrequently) provided by the district at a school level are not adequate as they do not empower teachers to offer additional support. It was felt that support should be extended to parents as well. These concerns raised by the SBST tell of bigger and some deeper social problems encountered by teachers teaching in this rural setting. The community needed to know about their social responsibility in order to minimise the problems that prevail in their communities. The community had an expectation but the school was unable to help the younger generation to prosper and become responsible without community cooperation. Families and communities shape the knowledge of their children.

5.3 Recommendations

- A systematic training programme should be in place for effective implementation of IE. Teachers should be afforded enrichment opportunities to assume their roles of teaching in an inclusive environment.
- Working as a team and building good strong relations should be continuously promoted. Experienced and knowledgeable teachers should be able to assist with the issues that arise and needs be supported. The spirit of Ubuntu should boost the morale of others who are losing hope in working with learners who are experiencing difficulties in learning.

- The SBST members should encourage and motivate teachers to offer care and support for all identified learners who are experiencing difficulties in learning. Workshops to change teachers attitude about the IE should be conducted.
- Policy designers and administrators should take into cognisance the contexts and different situations. An open-door policy is recommended for other stakeholders who are directly involved in various settings to make some contributions. Teachers should be consulted and be involved in proposed policies before the approvals. Agreements and guidelines cannot be followed, as teachers do not can provide significant input. Monitoring and evaluation of the programme should be carried out by accounting officials and if there is a need for further improvements this should be effected timeously.
- Knowledge, skills and information about the significance on the IE and the SBST should be communicated to parents and communities and their roles in advocating policies should be shared with all community structures.
- More parents should be involved in committees and IE vision and purposes ought to be clarified so that all groups understand the need to offer additional support to learners who are experiencing difficulties to learning.
- The DBE budget should be increased and specific time be allocated for IE to be effectively implemented so that appropriate resources are in place at the time of implementation.
- The SBST should compile a year plan of activities and possible interventions. Such a plan could be shared with the classroom teachers and their contributions and suggestions ought to be considered.
- A basic IE course should be introduced as one of the initial teacher programme so that all new teachers have basic foundations in IE.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The study was limited to one rural primary school in the Embo area. Since there are other available primary schools in the area, teachers might have different views and experiences of the role of the SBST in those schools. Findings of the study cannot be generalised to other rural primary schools even if they are with the same characteristics because of different backgrounds. Another observed limitation was the small population at the school was interviewed, namely the SBST members and three classroom teachers. Other teachers were excluded from the study since one representative from each phase was interviewed. Other teachers could have provided more profound information had they been included in the study. Participants of this study were based at a primary school only. High school teachers may have different experiences of the role of the SBST in their schools. Since I was once a teacher for twenty years prior to the start of the research and also both a SBST and SMT member who chaired one of the sub-committees at the school, the involvement and insights of the researcher may have had an influence whilst collecting and analysing data. A neutral person conducting the same study could produce different results. The data were collected by means of interviews only and other methods may have yielded different results. I relied entirely on the selected participants responses.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

- Research could be conducted in rural high schools to obtain different and similar views about the role of the SBSTs in supporting teachers.
- Research into intervention strategies, that ordinary classroom teachers can implement to support learners who are experiencing difficulties to learning could be conducted.
- Research into how clusters, conferences and forums organised by teachers can support learners with difficulties in learning at rural schools could be conducted.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a summary of the findings and recommendations for this study which aimed to explore the experiences of the SBST's members and classroom teachers with the view to exploring how teaching and learning takes place within an Inclusive Education framework.

The overall findings indicated that there was a need for teachers in rural schools to be better supported in improving their knowledge of the IE by means of training and ongoing support by the DBST. The SBST does play a significant role, as they are vital for the success of Inclusive Education in a schooling system and they do offer support regarding the new challenges teachers face at a rural school.

A bigger allocation of the budget for IE is recommended so as to increase the supply of appropriate resources for effective teaching and learning to take place in the classroom as additional support is needed.

Participants acknowledged that a significant role was played by the SBST in addressing problems they encountered when dealing with learners who had difficulties in learning.

Factors that delay and interrupt the smooth implementation of IE should be eliminated.

NGOs and other departments are perceived as stakeholders who fully support the IE advocacy and should be used to the best for their expertise and resources. Teachers, parents, interested stakeholders and learners from rural communities should work together as a community in order to strengthen the implementation of the IE in the teaching and learning environment. The SBST should have a compiled plan on how the intervention strategies will be affected when addressing IE related activities.

In terms of the conceptual of the study – the Education White Paper 6 on IE – the school is compliant in some respect to this policy intent. It has the School Based Support Team in place, although not in terms of the stipulated composition. This means that the intent of the IE is there at the school, but the situational reality is such that its composition is by interest, skills and experience – which is considered more useful than following the guidelines of the composition of the SBST,

especially within the context of being a rural school and having minimal access to necessary support and/ or expert services. In terms of the kinds of support that the SBST provides to the classroom teachers in this school – the Education White Paper 6 policy framework lacks a rural gaze to what is possible in such contexts and therefore these general guidelines in terms of the functions of the SBST is inappropriate to rural contexts and therefore less useful. However, the interpretation of these functions by the SBST and by teachers are influenced by their daily realities of schooling in a rural community and such are responsive in nature and are limited to whatever exist within the school.

The study shows that although teachers have knowledge about basic IE, the day-to-day implementation remains problematic. The SBST do provide support and knowledge they have gained from the workshops they have attended in the district, but this is insufficient in dealing with all problems that teachers encounter in their classrooms. The study recommends that the DBE should capacitate and strengthen the existing structures, the SBST and DBST, with expertise, resources and infrastructure to be able to undertake their support roles effectively. Knowledgeable members of school community with remedial expertise should be of great service if they can be more active and available in assisting teachers to deal with barriers of learners. The study proposes the appropriate staff establishment and funding which can curb the problem of overcrowding in classes because it delays identification of learners with barriers because of large classes. Awareness campaigns of Inclusive Education as required by White Paper 6 be accessible in media platforms may improve unsatisfactory parental involvement in this landscape. However, the study acknowledges that most teachers are professionals which are dedicated and committed to helping their learners achieve. Regarding curriculum delivery, classroom teachers are guided by the SIAS policy which requires the curriculum to be flexible and be adapted or differentiated appropriately for learners with difficulties to learning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – CONSENT LETTER OF PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX B – LETTER OF REQUEST TO THE SCHOOL

APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SBST TEAM MEMBERS

APPENDIX D - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NON- MEMBERS OF SBST TEAM

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – CONSENT LETTER OF PARTICIPANTS

36A Minerva Road

Tongaat

4339

29 March 2018

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

My name is Thabisile Maphumulo and I am currently studying towards the Masters of Education (M.Ed.) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). I hereby request your approval to be one of the participants for this study. The title of my study is: Exploring the role of a School Based Support Team (SBST) in supporting teachers of a rural primary school.

I have selected you, as a SBST member, or as the teacher who has attended the School Based Support Team sessions for more than a year in your school, to participate in an interview. You will be used as a participant to collect data for this study.

You have been selected through a purposive sampling method to participate in the study. Your participation will include a series of interviews and you will be notified in advance of the time and date scheduled for the interview. The interviews will be of a conversational type, referring to events and activities of the SBST in your school. The interviews will take place at a time convenient to you and will not disrupt your day-to-day functioning regarding your responsibilities in the school.

Please note that:

- All confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.
- Each interview may take up to 45 minutes and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking where applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment: audio recording, video recording and photographic imaging.

I can be contacted at:

Email: sisimatil@gmail.com

Cell: 0781717549

My supervisor is Prof. Labby Ramrathan who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: ramrathanp@ukzn.ac.za,

Telephone 031-260 8065/ 0826749829

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Ms Phumelele Ximba, 031 260 3587, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Yours Sincerely

Thabisile B. Maphumulo

APPENDIX B – LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE SCHOOL

Gatekeepers informed consent form

36A Minerva Road

Tongaat

4339

27 March 2018

The Principal

Gwadu Primary School

Embo Reserve

Hillcrest

3650

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Thabisile Maphumulo and I am currently studying towards the Masters of Education (M.Ed.) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

I hereby request your approval to use the school premises to interview School Based Support Team (SBST) members and other teachers who have attended the School Based Support Team workshops for more than a year in your school. The title of my study is: Exploring the role of a School Based Support Team (SBST) in supporting teachers at a rural primary school. The teachers will be used as participants to collect data for this study. Your school has been identified as a possible site of research for this project so as to produce some data on the objectives (stated above) of the research. I will be using various data collecting tools such as semi structured interviews, as individuals and in focus groups to get information. Data collection would take place at a time and venue convenient for the participants and this process of data collection would not interfere with the day-to-day activities of the school. All participants will be appraised of the research process, their participation and their rights in the research processes through informed consent forms. Their permission will be sought prior to their participation in the data collection process.

Please note that:

- All confidentiality is guaranteed as inputs from participants will not be attributed individually to person. Should the need arise for participant attribution, these would be done with the express permission of the individual concerned, and that pseudonyms would be used to protect the participants' anonymity.
- Any information given by the participants cannot be used against any of the participants, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- The choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research is left to the participant. No one will be penalized for taking such action.
- The research aims at obtaining information about the SBSTs role in supporting teachers.
- Participants' involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

I can be contacted at:

Email: sisimati1@gmail.com

Cell: +27 781717549

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Mr P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, BONGANI ZACA..... (full name of the Principal of school) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I give permission for my school to be participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my school from participating in the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby consent to:

Audio recording of the interviews of participants: Yes/No

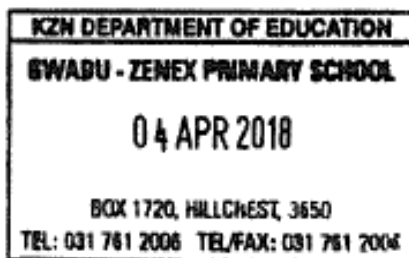
SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL



DATE

3/04/2018

School stamp:



APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SBST TEAM MEMBERS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SBST MEMBERS

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on your understanding and experiences of support received as a teacher from the SBST, as an outcome to the implementation of Inclusive Education in your school. You are not required to give your name at any time. Please respond to questions as truthfully as you can.

1. Does your school implement the policy of Inclusive Education? If so, how?
2. What is your role as a SBST member in your school?
3. How were you selected/identified?
4. What skills or knowledge do you need to be a member of a SBST? Where and when did obtain such knowledge?
5. What kind of support do you need to provide to teachers?
6. How and when do you support teachers?
7. List your challenges in facilitating support to the teachers.
8. List your successes in facilitating support to the teachers.
9. Describe your experience(s) working in a rural primary school, in an inclusive environment.
10. What strategies could be used to improve the SBST support in a rural school, and in particular, your school?

APPENDIX D - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NON- MEMBERS OF SBST TEAM

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR NON-SBST MEMBERS

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on your understanding and experiences of support received as a teacher from the SBST, as an outcome to the implementation of Inclusive Education in your school. You are not required to give your name at any time. Please respond to questions as truthfully as you can.

1. Does your school implement the policy of Inclusive Education? If so, how?
2. What do you understand by the School Based Support Team (SBST)?
3. Do you have an established SBST in your school?
4. Who are the members? How were they selected/identified?
5. What does this team do?
6. What support do you need in order to implement Inclusive Education?
7. Describe your experience(s) of working in a rural primary school, in an inclusive environment.
8. Identify support obtained from the team. Are there any significant lessons you learnt from the SBST?
9. Which professional development topics were the most interesting when presented by the SBST? Why?
10. How have you adjusted your teaching styles after SBST support?
11. If you have done so, are there any challenges in implementing the support you have gained in the inclusive classroom?
12. What strategies would you suggest to enhance the support of the SBST in a rural school, in particular, your school?

APPENDIX E – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FOCUS GROUP

Focus group interview questions

(for members of the SBST and/non SBST members i.e. classroom teachers)

1. What is your opinion about having a SBST in your school?
2. Do you think the SBST is achieving its purpose in the school?
3. Does the SBST manage relationships between teachers and the outside stakeholders towards achieving the Basic Education Department's expectation of 'encouraging vibrant communities of practice' within schools? Please elaborate.
4. How do you rate the participation level of the SBST in providing support to enable teachers to deal with learners in Inclusive Classrooms?
5. How do you rate the participation level of teachers who receive support for the benefit of the Inclusive Classroom?
6. What would you suggest could be done and/or improved to make the SBST more useful to the school?

APPENDIX F - ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL



29 May 2018

Mrs Thabizile Belinda Maphumulo (211549772)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Maphumulo,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0903/018M

Project Title: Exploring the role of a School Based Support Team (SBST) in supporting teachers of a rural primary school

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 11 April 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor I. Ramrathan
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyaer Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX G – LANGUAGE EDITING PROOF

PROOFREADING/EDITING

STUDENT: Ms. Thabisile Maphumulo

TITLE: Exploring the role of a school-based support team (SBST) in supporting teachers at a rural primary school.

I have read the above work and made suggestions pertaining to language in each paragraph. I have, however, not seen the final copy and am aware that errors can slip through after only one reading.

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APPENDIX H- TURNITIN RECEIPT



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