

**FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING LEARNER SUPPORT IN JOHANNESBURG  
NORTH DISTRICT**

by

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Foundation phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and all sources used have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation for originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements of originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this thesis or part of it for examination at Unisa for another qualification or any other higher institution.



SIGNATURE

2020-10-23

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late father Venancio Machando Chidhakwa Mhofu and my mother Maritha Madzamba Rubvuwo Vanyamita for being my inspiration.

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I am grateful to my supervisors, Prof. F.D. Mahlo and Dr. T. Makgakga, for being good mentors, advisors and supporters. Thank you for your guidance, which lead to my success.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Implementation of learner support is a challenge to most educators. The real challenge lies in the management of learner support in an under resourced and overcrowded diverse classroom. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach to navigate the participants' understanding of learner support answer the research questions that sought to explore the phenomenon of learner support and diversity, and the latest developments, policies and practices related to learner support and inclusion as well as implementation of learner support. A sample of three Foundation Phase teachers and one HOD was chosen. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observation and document analysis. It emerged from the literature study that learner support and inclusive education has become a reality in Lesotho, Zimbabwe, South Africa and abroad. Most schools in these countries now epitomize ECD learner ship, for example in South Africa, where most schools access ECD classes. This is indicative of the cardinal point of education, as imbedded in early childhood learning, hence the need to priorities equal and quality education through learner support. Although learner support is a reality in the above-mentioned countries, there are still many challenges that need to be overcome, such as the lack of knowledge of learner diversity, lack of support structure and services, inflexible curricular, lack of learning support expertise, too many learners per teacher. These are factors that can be said to be militating against effective learner support and development. The same challenges were also raised during the interviews. The teachers and HOD also raised concern over inadequate resources and large classes as well as medium of instruction as hindering learner support. Recommendations based on the findings in this study focus mainly on the empowerment of teachers and re-thinking the education system, such as employment of enough teachers to address issue of overcrowding, and revisiting the use of LoLT to enhance rapport between teachers and learners. It was also revealed during the interviews that the support from the parents, SBST and DBST was not well consolidated, and had an adverse effect on the implementation of learner support. For example, support at school was said to be only theoretical, whereas the facilitators from the district were scarce and teachers had no viable means of getting in touch with the DBST. The significance of district learning

support facilitators in supporting teachers with learner support strategies in diverse classrooms is important topic for future study.

**Key words:** support, classroom, diversity, diverse, School Based Support Team School-Based Support Team, District Based Support Team, Department of Basic Education, teachers, inclusion

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS**

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
DBST	District Based Support Team
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
FP	Foundation Phase
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
IE	Inclusive Education
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LTSM	Learning Teaching and Support Materials
SBST	School Based Support Team
SNAS	Special Needs Assessment
SGB	School Governing Board
SIAS	Screening Identification Assessment and Support
UNESCO	United Nation Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WP6	White Paper 6 on: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

This study sought to investigate how learner support is implemented in the Foundation Phase classroom, as well as experiences that are encountered by the Foundation Phase teachers as they render support to learners with learning difficulties. The investigation was carried out in the Ordinary Primary School in the Johannesburg North District. Learner support is significant, as most schools in South Africa accommodate learners from diverse cultures. Learning and teaching process support must therefore focus broadly on learner needs (DBE, 2014).

South African education system underwent several models from 1994 and this resulted in the policy of Inclusive Education as depicted in the Education White Paper 6 of 2001. The Education White Paper is linked to support mentioned in the above paragraph because it focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevents it from meeting the full range of learning needs (The Education White paper 6, 2001:17). The objective of the introduction of Inclusive Education ensured the accommodation of learners with different learning and development needs in ordinary or mainstream schools. The accommodation of the special need children was meant to depend on the District Based Support Team (DBST) and the School Based Support Team (SBST). According to (The Education White Paper 6, 2001), the School should come up with school-based support, subject specialists, and remedial teams to help support learners by addressing the diversity in the class. In the context of this study, learner diversity implies different styles and rates of learning. Teachers are expected to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of learners by ensuring quality education to all through appropriate teaching strategies and resource use (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO),1994). As alluded earlier the education system of South Africa encouraged inclusion of learners in schools on the basis of gender, race as well as socio - economic status. The system was extended to incorporate learners on the basis of ability and disability.

The Department of Education (2001:9) acknowledges that all learners can learn with support of adequate learning materials by teachers and assistive devices appropriate for learning and development needs. The learning needs imply different learning styles, such as visually-oriented, tactile-oriented and auditory-oriented learning, where the most crucial aspect of the Education White Paper 6 is to provide for learners who require high level of support. These are the learners who experience barriers to learning and development in their classroom. In the quest to render support to learners the Government published the National Strategy on Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS2008). The development of the SIAS was meant to allow large numbers of children of school going age, who experienced barriers to learning to exercise their right to basic education and to access necessary learner support. (DBE, 2014). Learning support packages focuses on learners who need support these are learners who have learning difficulties. The unfortunate aspect is that most of the teachers were trained before the inception of Inclusive Education. This implies that few educators have the technical know-how to render support without excluding learners who need special education and development. According to (Neil, Neil and Hugo, 2013:2), there is insufficient professional training of teachers. Therefore, it becomes a challenge for teachers to support learners with learning difficulties if they are not fully equipped to render such support.

McMillan and Schumacher (2012:3) believe teacher education must be reformed so that teachers are better prepared for the systems such as SIAS, by offering in-service training by competent and experienced people. In this regard, Landsberg et al. (2016:105) state that teachers should be able to change the classroom environment and adapt appropriate technology to provide for curriculum needs for a diversity of learners. According to Woolfolk (2014:366), teachers require “self-efficacy”, that is, “the person’s sense of being able to deal effectively with a task”. Teachers who receive support from the Department of Education will be able to function and perform well. The Department of Basic Education renders support to teachers such that they can be equipped with the skills to support learners in their classrooms. Teachers need support from professionals for advice and guidance.

“Support can be defined as those activities that increase the capacity of a school in responding to diversity” (Mahlo, 2011). It is against this background of learner diversity that the researcher seeks to investigate how learner support addresses learners’ diverse needs. Learner support in schools will not require only providing these learners with necessary support for learning and development, but also exploring challenges that teachers face during learner support.

## **1.2. BACKGROUND**

According to Landsberg, Kruger and Swart (2016), South Africa has recently introduced Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), which have legal and ethical considerations for barrier-free education. The legal framework for barrier-free education evolved from the international human rights law, through the processes of establishing educational rights for persons with disability (UNESCO, 2005:256). A barrier-free education refers to a situation of inclusive education, where in South Africa, inclusive education cannot be separated from democracy. It has values such as freedom, equality, and diversity (Engelbrecht, 2010). The main aim of education in any democratic society is to provide quality education to all learners, such that they can reach their full potential (DBE, 2015).

The White Paper 6 (2001) states that inclusion is by definition concerned with all learners, and with overcoming barriers to all forms of marginalisation, exclusion, and under achievement (Aniscow, Booth and Dyson 2011). The policy of screening identification assessment and support, SIAS stresses early support, SIAS (2008, 2014, and 2015). The researcher is a qualified inclusive education teacher, teaching at the selected site. The researcher has had a chance to watch/observe how fellow teachers embrace learner support in their classrooms. It seems that policy is clear about learner support, but teachers seem to develop strategies that deviate from policy, because most teachers enrolled at the school were trained before the inception of inclusive education. The policy on screening identification assessment and support that was published in 2014 is evidence on the identification and screening that should be done by teachers concerning learner support. There is a gap, because teachers appear not to be fully implementing

what the policy states, and hence, there is need to research Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support.

### **1.3. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The research could contribute immensely in changing teachers' own practices by exposure to useful or effective strategies during learner support. The Foundation Phase classes comprise of learners who come from diverse backgrounds, and development support given to them should fulfil this diversity (Woolfolk, 2014). The support is meant for children to participate and develop to their full potential in the neighbourhood schools and their peers (Department of Basic Education, 2015). In so doing, learner support programmes also appeared to have improved through support strategies. The support programmes are:

- provision of specialist services by specialised professional staff;
- curriculum differentiation which includes adjustments and accommodations in assessment;
- provision of specialised Learning and Teaching Support Materials and assistive technology; and training and mentoring of teachers, managers and support staff (SIAS, 2014:19).

The aim of learner support is to optimise learning (DBE, 2016). Furthermore, the support programmes are intended to deal with the scope of barriers that cause learning difficulties. There is a problem where teachers seem to be experiencing challenges when implementing learner support in a diverse Foundation Phase classroom. The researcher is also a Foundation Phase teacher, who has casually discussed learner support with fellow Foundation Phase colleagues. It is during these discussions that the researcher became cognisant of the fact that teachers have different experiences in the implantation of support learners. The role of the teacher is to have the classroom support process in place. Chataika, Mackenzie and Swartz (2012) argue that Foundation Phase teachers are given administrative support and adequate learning support materials and assistive

devices appropriate for the needs of learners. The study has revealed that the district facilitators should empower the teachers more often in order for the teachers to execute learner support comprehensively. Therefore, the rationale for this study would be its provision for teacher knowledge that would offer corrective measures to learner support in diverse classrooms. support. Despite being given adequate learning and support materials; it seems that the facilitators who are supposed to empower the teachers are not coping with the huge numbers of teachers. Carl (2012:2) states that teachers face tremendous challenges, several of which are related to curriculum.

#### **1.4. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Teachers must have at their disposal specific curriculum skills and knowledge which enable them to be effectively involved in the classroom (Carl, 2012:15). Teachers at school, Foundation Phase teachers in particular, are supposed to be supporting struggling learners in their diverse classrooms, but they seem to be struggling with huge numbers of learners. According to SIAS document, Foundation Phase teachers are responsible for screening identifying, assessing and supporting learners. Therefore, it was important to investigate Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in learner support.

#### **1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

-Main research question

What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in the Johannesburg North District?

Sub –research question

- What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms in the Johannesburg North District?
- How do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support in the Johannesburg North District?

- What strategies can enhance learner support in the Foundation Phase in the Johannesburg North District?

## **1.6. PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to explore Foundation Phase teacher's experiences in implementing learner support and develop strategies that determine how teachers provide and enhance learning support in the Foundation Phase.

## **1.7. AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this research was to investigate Foundation Phase teachers' experience when implementing learner support in the diverse Foundation Phase Classrooms in the Johannesburg North District.

This study intended to achieve the following objectives that address the research problems.

Objectives of the study

1. to explore teachers' experiences in supporting learners;
2. to determine how teachers provide learning support; and
3. to develop strategies that can enhance learner support in Foundation Phase.

## **1.8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The Research Methods are based on two popular philosophical beliefs, namely positivism and post-positivism.

### **Positivism**

Positivism refers to an evidence-based reality that can be mathematically interpreted. It “was coined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by” Comte (1759). Positivism might refer to quantitative research method, as a quantitative research approach uses numbers and qualitative research methods employ words.

### **“Post-positivism”**

“Post-positivism is a research philosophy” where truth is constructed through dialogue: valid knowledge and claims emerge as conflicting interpretations, and action possibilities are discussed and negotiated among the members of the community. Researchers do not ask themselves ‘is this the truth?’ but rather, they talk about the issues raised during the interviews, where the participant’s reaction and their interpretations are interwoven (Ritchie and Rigano, 2001:752). The qualitative method uses the principles of post positivism Ryan (2017:12-13). Post-positivist research principles emphasise meaning and new knowledge, and movements that aspire to change the world and contribute towards social justice (Ryan, 2017:12-13).

This study followed a post-positivistic approach and used a qualitative research design. According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2014:6), the research design is the plan that describes the conditions and procedures for collecting and analysing data. Furthermore, (Merriam, 1998:48) states that, “plan or a map for the process of finding solutions to research problems is called a design”. The research design in this study was meant to answer the research question namely; “What are Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District?”

The research design was also planned to answer the sub-questions: *What are Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms; how do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support; and what strategies can enhance learner support in Foundation Phase?* In this study one situation was investigated to find out the experiences of teachers in implementing learner support from an inclusive education perspective.

Methodology directs the researcher as the blue print in conducting the study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). There are two recognised approaches to research, namely quantitative and qualitative paradigms (DeVos, Strydom and Fouche, 2014). McMillan and Schumacher (ibid.) explain that research can be viewed as scientific or evidence-based inquiry, where this type of research uses numbers to quantify evidence, leading it to be called quantitative research. Below is a brief discussion on what constitutes quantitative and qualitative research.

#### -Quantitative research

“Questionnaires are often used in this research setting, because it is very easy to gather a huge amount of information in a very short space of time”. If questions are well structured, they will draw a lot of information from the participants. It is also easy to provide correct answers to the research questions in a short space of time. Questionnaires are also popular for maintaining anonymity, and this may guarantee honest responses from participants. However, we should not lose focus of the fact that questionnaires can be costly to print, and difficult to generate questions, of which most will be multiple choice.

#### -Qualitative Research

Qualitative research deals with the process that drive behaviour and the experiences of life” (Newby ,2010:92). “A qualitative approach draws on insight and interpretation and allow researchers to draw on their subjective responses from the evidence” (Newby ,2010:116). Qualitative research denotes the type of inquiry in which the qualities, characteristics or the properties of a phenomenon are at the centre of the research. Qualitative approach was used since it allowed opportunity to find the possible experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in implementing learner support, where the phenomenon of teachers’ experiences and learner support were explored.

#### -Advantages of qualitative research

According to (Creswell, 2018), the nature of questions relates to **how** or **what** questions, and in this study the researcher came up with such questions as: **what** are Foundation



Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms?

**How** do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support?

**What** strategies can enhance learner support in the Foundation Phase?

This study, as noted by Creswell, involved teachers in their natural teaching set up, they were not removed from their natural teaching environment for the purpose of gathering information. So, in this study, the researcher was able to tell the story of learner support from the point view of the Foundation Phase teachers. Furthermore, (Newby, 2010:115), states that qualitative research is concerned with understanding how people choose to live their lives, the meaning they give to their experiences, and their feelings about their condition. Qualitative research may include three approaches, such as ethnography, action research, or case study.

“A case study is a qualitative research method that examines a bounded setting”, (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2014:1). Furthermore, Newby, 2010 :115) states that “a case study is an investigation of a single instance, usually with the goal of identifying and perhaps understanding how an issue arose, how a problem was resolved, often with the purpose of isolating critical incidents that act as decision points for a change”. MacMillan and Schumacher (2014:32), state that a case may be a programme, an event, an activity, or a set of individuals bounded in time and place. It is the researcher who defines a case. DeVos, Strydom and Fouche (2014) state that there are three types of case studies:

- the collective case study furthers the understanding of the researcher about a social issue or population being studied;
- the intrinsic case study is solely focused on the aim of gaining a better understanding of the individual case; and
- the instrumental case study is used to elaborate on theory or to gain a better understanding. (Woolfolk, 2014).

In this study, the researcher used as a case study design to explain and bring forth the process of data collection (DeVos, Strydom and Fouche, 2014).

The concept case study in this study refers to a process that furthers the understanding of a social issue or population being studied within a specific time and school setting in Johannesburg North District. The issue being studied is how Foundation Phase teachers are experiencing learner support and this at level.

### **1.9. POPULATION**

The Johannesburg North District in Gauteng Province houses participating 269 urban primary schools. Foundation Phase grades that participated in this study include Grade One, Two and Grade Three classes. The population of a regular primary school in Johannesburg North comprise four participants, which are categorised as follows: one FP HOD, and three FP teachers.

### **1.10. SAMPLING**

For this research the site selection of participants was from a particular school in Johannesburg North District, where the research participants are attempting to implement learner support strategies in the Foundation Phase classrooms. The research, concept/theory-based sampling was chosen, because “it is a strategy used to select the sample of participants known to be attempting to implement the concept /theory” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:350).

### **1.11. DATA ANALYSIS**

Interviews, observations, and document analysis were the instruments used to collect data. Observation was carried out in the Foundation Phase classrooms for the purposes of gathering and examining data on a non-participant basis, where the researcher was the non-participant observer in this study. The advantage of observation was that it allowed the researcher an uninterrupted check of non-verbal behaviour and communication between the teacher and learners under observation. Teachers’ attitudes in respect of learner support was observed. The researcher observed the teachers’ attitude during learning support periods in the classroom, where teachers were teaching English teaching reading lessons.

Documents such as The White Paper 6, as well as Policy on screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS), CAPS were used to analyse teachers' learning support plan books in order to ascertain whether teachers were implementing policy on learner support, diversity, and inclusion. Document analysis is not confined to the construction or composition of the source but includes the context of the artefact or image and requirements about the purpose, role, and use in the community or society in and for which it was constructed (Le Roux, 2014:31). Teachers exploited the learning and teaching context to support struggling learners in their diverse classrooms so, learner support books were also analysed.

The researcher compared data to establish trends and patterns that were used when rendering learner support and those were written down. The procedure began with naming and categorising the text through close examination of data (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014) contend that data analysis takes the form of written language in qualitative study.

### **1.12. LIMITATIONS**

The researcher dealt with the financial and time constraints that arise with the study. These techniques required intense concentration and time in order to rule out any misconceptions, where due to time constraints, the numbers of participants were limited to four. It is also very likely that the problems the researcher found at the School under study may also be occurring other schools in this Johannesburg District (D10). This is a limitation to the study. but the researcher is hoping that the results of the study will be a representative or be transferred to the whole of the District and other districts beyond Johannesburg North. The time allocated to observe teaches rendering learner support was limited. The researcher did not have funding, which meant that the budget constraints were also a limiting factor to the study.

### **1.13. DELIMITATIONS**

Learner support can mean different things to a lot of people some might emphasize support given to learners struggling academically only but not referring to social, moral

and or infrastructural support. For the purpose of this study, the researcher put emphasis on support in a diverse classroom. This study is limited to a public school that is characterized by overcrowding in Foundation Phase, therefore focus will mainly be on Foundation Phase teachers' experiences as they endeavour to support learners in an environment characterised by huge numbers of learners and diversity.

#### **1.14. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

There is dearth of learner support research in South Africa. This study has yielded a missing paradigm in affective issues in learner support. Nationally, inclusive education is not welcomed by many especially those who do not understand that diversity is an anchor in rendering support. Findings from this study might help teachers to understand learner support as it is implemented in schools with learners from diverse backgrounds. Learners who are supported correctly at the foundation phase level will be literate and numerate hence they will be able to make informed decision. A nation with informed citizens, who have received an education, will enjoy a productive workforce that does not cripple the economy of the country with unrealistic grants such as child welfare because parents will be educated and having jobs so financial demands will be minimised and grade repetition in schools will diminish. In other words, no financial pressure will be exerted on the national treasury because a lot of people will be working and be in need of monetary help from the Government. Learner support will help teachers and learners to understand each other as it explores the learning and teaching styles in their social, academic, and economic contexts. Based on what participants have indicated, some interventions or strategies could be developed and documented by policymakers, thereby adding knowledge on the subject of learner support in South African schools.

#### **1.15. RESEARCH ETHICS**

Research ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interest and well-being of the participants are not harmed because of research being done (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004). According to Ngubane (2005), ethics is indicative of the moral dimensions of about what is right and wrong while one is involved in research.

Since most educational research focuses primarily on human beings, the researcher was ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the participants (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:23). As the researcher in this study, I ensured that consent was obtained from all participants and relevant institutions.

Further permission to conduct the study was granted by Gauteng Department of Education, and permission to conduct the study was requested from the district officials, principals and teachers who took part in the research.

The researcher was open and honest with the participants about all aspects of the study and also ensured that participants became aware that no harm or exploitation would be encountered due to their participation in the research. The researcher clarified the research goals to the participant and made sure that the results or outcome of the research were accessible to all who took part in the research.

## **1.16. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**1.16.1. BARRIERS TO EDUCATION:** this refers “to the difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site /or within the learner himself which prevent access to learning and development for the learners,” (DBE).

**1.16.2. CASE STUDY:** this refers to a report about a particular person or thing, to show an example of a general principle (Cambridge, 2004). This study used case study design to explain and bring forth definition of the processes of data collection.

**1.16.3. DISABILITY:** A barrier to participation of pupils with impairment or chronic illness arising from an interaction of the impairment or illness with discriminatory attitudes, cultures, action policies, or institutional policies. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) it is described as any restriction or lack of ability to perform in a manner or within a range considered normal for a human being (WHO, 1996)

**1.16.4. DISTRICT BASED SUPPORT TEAM:** this refers to the team from the District that render and manages inclusive education. The (DBST) is tasked with providing an

integrated support service by providers employed by the Department of Education, who draw from the expertise of educational institutions (DOE, 2003,2005)

**1.16.5. DIVERSITY:** means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognising our individual differences, these can be along the dimension of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio- economic status. Age, physical abilities, religious beliefs political beliefs or other ideologies.

**1.16.6. EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6:** a policy that categorises level of support according to requirements rather than disability.

**1.16.7. INCLUSION:** Broad definitions of inclusion do not focus on specific groups of students, but rather on the diversity of all students, and every other member of the school community (Armstrong et al., 2010: 29).

**1.16.8. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:** “Inclusive Education is system of education in which all children and adults are enrolled in order to actively participate regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, and without discrimination” (DOE, 2015) (The Education White Paper 6, 2001).

**1.16.9. LEARNER SUPPORT:** this refers to any activity that provides direct support for learning to individual learners over and above that which is normally provided in a standard learning programme that leads to their learning goal. For purposes of this study, the concept of learner support implies any activity that assists Foundation Phase learners in attaining their full potential in relationship to their diverse needs.

**1.16.9. MAINSTREAM OR ORDINARY SCHOOLS:** These cater for learners who are in need of low intensity support. Teachers are supported by the School Based Support Team, (SBST) and experts from DBST (Landsberg et al2016:99).

#### **1.16.10. POLICY**

A policy refers to a deliberate plan of action designed to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes to be adopted by schools, government, party, persons etc. (Oxford, 2016). A policy is a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in a particular situation that has

been agreed by a government or business (Cambridge, 2004). Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) is a policy that aims to respond to the needs of all learners particularly those who are vulnerable and most likely to be marginalised and excluded (DBE, 2014)

#### **1.16.11. SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM**

This is the structure that supports all, assessments and support activities taking place for learning and development of the learner at school. (DBE, 2001a:29).

**1.16.12. SUPPORT STRATEGIES:** this refers to the plan of action designed or set to achieve goals is also referred to as support strategies (SIAS, 2014).

### **1.17. EXPOSITION OF THE STUDY**

**Chapter One:** Background and introduction: presents a general review and rationale of the study, the problem statement, aims, and objectives.

**Chapter Two:** Literature Review: presents most recent developments practices and policies related to learner support in South Africa and overseas. It also discussed learner support and inclusion.

**Chapter Three:** Research Methodology: presents the research design and data collection method used in the research.

**Chapter Four:** Data Presentations and Analysis: the purpose of this chapter is to present data that was collected and analysed, and a discussion of the findings.

**Chapter Five:** Summary, Recommendation and Conclusion: It discussed overview, investigation and recommendations, as well as the conclusion of the whole study.

## **1.18. CONCLUSION**

This chapter began with the introduction and the background on inclusive education and inclusion policies as they have been adapted from The Salamanca statement (1994) and The Education White Paper 6 (2001) and Inclusive Education advocate learner support in the South African Schools. This section also contains discussions on the statement purpose, research questions and objectives of e research.

Research methodology and design also highlighted ways used in population sampling techniques of collecting data, as well as data analysis and interpretation methods by means of which the researcher ensured reliability and validity as well as limitation of the study received mention. Definitions of terms/concepts that were used in the study were also given. The layout of chapters that are in this study were set forth, and a brief explanation of what was done in each chapter highlighted. The next chapter presents a review of extant literature relevant to the study.



## **CHAPTER 2**

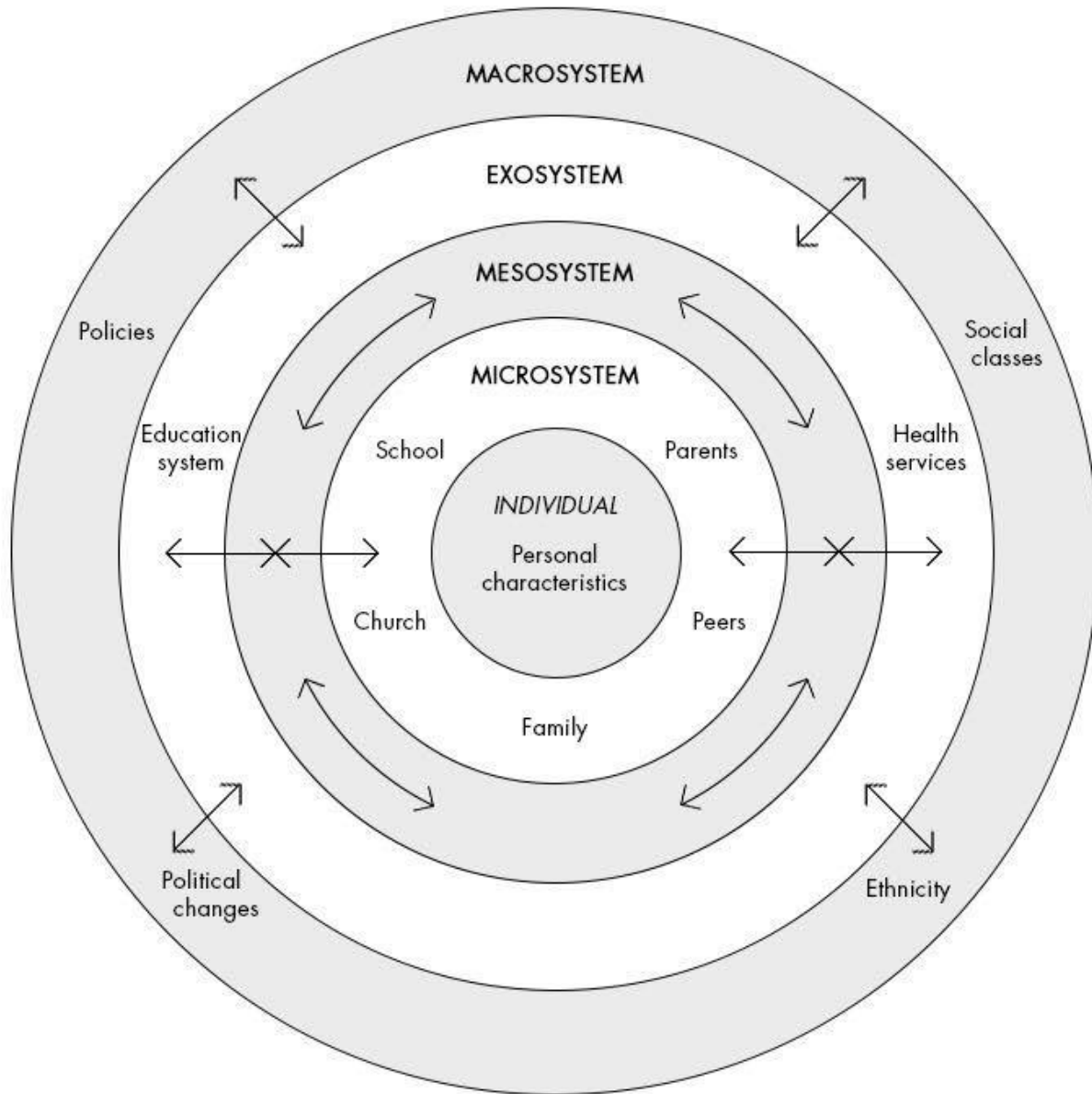
### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter highlighted the background to the study. This chapter addresses Bronfenbrenner's bio ecological systems theory as a theoretical framework that underpins learner support in this research. It also determines learner support from both global as well as South African perspectives. The urgency to implement support needs for learners with learning difficulties in order for them to attain to their full potential is dependent on what the literature states about learner support, barriers to learning, and systemic barriers. The researcher needed to review literature on learner support to explore how interaction among institutions, learning materials and the learner results in support that is constant with personal potential. In this study, the SBST did not have enough time to deal with the experiences of teachers and learners in the classrooms, the reasons for which were shared by participants as detailed in Chapter Four. The DBST and SBST support to learners in the foundation phase is hinged on Bronfenbrenner, bio-ecological model. The model has five systems namely; microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macro system and chronosystem.

The chronosystem encapsulates the dimensions of time and how it relates specifically to interaction between these systems and their influence on individual development (Landsberg et al., 2016). Focus is on how the learner, improves as the systems interact. The following diagramme provides a schematic of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model as it positions the individual learner at the centre of the systems that affects learning and development support of this child. Fig 2.1 below is illustrative of the schematic diagramme of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model.

Fig:2.1



A schematic diagramme of Bronfenbrenner' Bio-ecological Model, Hyman, (2014).

## 2.2. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The legal basis for the dissemination of inclusive practices in the South African educational system exists in several important documents. To begin with, the Constitution of South Africa guarantees equal opportunities for all in the country. The Education Act

of 1996, as well as White Paper 6 of 2001, the policy of Screening Identification, Assessment and Support (2014), and the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015) subscribe to inclusive education. As inclusive education is spread within the bio-ecological model to the national education system, it is important to study the experience of such a model, as this model presents an example of multi-dimensional model of human development (Landsberg et al., 2016).

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems model facilitates the expansion of the concept from medical diagnosis to a more holistic recognition of the extent of barriers to learning and emphasises the imperative to support learners in overcoming barriers towards participation in mainstream education and society at large (Conway, 2017). While acknowledging the importance of dynamic and committed teachers, the implementation of learner support to create an inclusive environment for learning is apparent. Following this, the research explored foundation teachers' experiences in implementing learner support. The goal of the study was reported and discussed in this model, and this was meant to give the teachers the correct perception of learner support as implemented. This chapter explored the views and perception of learner support within both a global and South African context. The extant literature and policy documents on learner support were of importance to teachers as they used them in providing learning support.

### **2.3. LEARNER SUPPORT**

Learner support is defined as, "strategies which empower learners to establish and fulfil their learning, career and personal potential" (Philip and Jim, 2005). (Green and Melbourne, 2015) contend that learner support refers to any activity beyond a college's prescribed programme content that contributes to individual students' attendances, retention, and learning achievements.)

All three definitions above emphasise that learner support can be realised when there is interaction among the institutions, learning materials and the learner and the results of the interactive support goes beyond college/school life and fulfils personal potential. According to (SIAS), a participant manual for educators (2015), support is designed to ensure access and participation of all learners to reach their potential. For meaningful

learner support to be realised, there must be collaboration among all stake holders, where all learners with diverse needs will be accommodated in the mainstream or ordinary schools. Landsberg et al. (2016:96) state that the Education White Paper 6 (DBE, 2001), makes provision for support by means of a systems approach and collaboration between various systems. As mentioned earlier, the systems in the study will be undertaken according to the premise of Bronfenbrenner's bio ecological systems theory or systems change perspective. The experiences of teachers in provision of learner support in the Foundation Phase as the focus of this research will be discussed. (Department of Education, 2001:15), defines learner support as any form of help, assistance and guidance given to learners who experience barriers to learning so as to enable them to overcome their barriers. This support can be of a low intensity, moderate or high-intensity, depending on the needs of the individual learner.

Support can also be defined as all the activities that enhance the capacity of a school to cater for diversity and ensure effective learning and teaching for all their learners, (Department of Education, 2005:22). Individual support generally aims to increase the inclusiveness of the curriculum. Support, in a nutshell, is thus an integral part of all teaching.

Support programmes refer to structured interventions delivered at schools and in the classrooms within specific frames; while a package of support is designed to address these barriers. The focus of support in this study is on learners with learning difficulties in a diverse Foundation Phase classroom. Educators are expected to harbour expertise on how to best handle diversity, as well as how to support learners with learning difficulties. The researcher also intends to explore experiences that educators face when supporting learners.

Teachers in Foundation Phase must undergo specialisation courses in Foundation Phase and Early Childhood. Education White Paper 6 explains that there will be a qualitative upgrading of their service. For the learner to grow to their maximum a high degree of flexibility is maintained with regard to individual learner's choice of cognitive development (ibid.).

Support must be organised in such a way that a range of barriers to accessing the curriculum is uncovered and addressed (DBE, 2001). When teachers offer learning support to learners, they must be wary of activities that increase the capacity of the response to diversity (DBE, 2015). Inclusive practice is an important component of support and refers to strategies adopted, technical support provided, structures and procedures applied, and actions carried out in the pursuit of learners who experience barriers to learning (Booth and Winslow, 2016). According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010) the practice of learning support is essentially constructivist in approach, and maintains a high degree of flexibility with regard to the individual Learner's course of cognitive development. Donald et al. (2010) further assert that learners should be supported in reducing, circumventing, breaking through, and even removing barriers in order for each to achieve the maximum independence possible learning by alluding to Vygotsky's principle of the zone of proximal development. The utilisation of the learner's strength is successfully achieved under guidance of someone who is more capable than the learner (Donald et al., 2010). Counselling, as clearly reflected in the SIAS (DoE, 2014), will harness inclusion. The learner support in this study will target diversity, curriculum, and specifically learner support and specialised intervention as it is at the centre of inclusivity. The resources that learners can access through teachers' experiences in order to carry out the learning support process must be sensitive to the needs of diverse learners.

## **2.4. LEARNER SUPPORT AT THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **2.4.1 INTRODUCTION: POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

The first global commitment towards Education for All (EFA) was made in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. The commitment was issued from an international conference including 155 countries and representatives from 150 government and non-government organisations. The initial commitments issuing from the Jomtien commitment was that primary school education would be accessible to all learners and that illiteracy would be reduced by the year 2000, (UNESCO, 1990).

A second defining milestone in the development of inclusive education internationally was the Salamanca Statement issued in Salamanca, Spain UNESCO (1994). The statement reaffirmed the commitment to Education for All (EFA). In addition, the statement called on signatory governments to ensure their respective departments of education adopted principles of inclusion offering all children in mainstream education appropriate support.

The commitment of entire communities is required so as to develop a positive environment supportive of inclusion of all individuals (UNESCO,1994). As a follow-up to the Salamanca Statement, in 2000, the signatory countries including South Africa, again reassembled in Dakar, Senegal in order to reflect on the progress in implementation of the recommendation of the Salamanca Statement and the achievement of the goal of Education for All (EFA) (Cayley Conway ,2017).

Countries have passed legislation and adopted Inclusive Education policies that are coupled with strategies of comprehensive education (knowledge dissemination) and awareness (Peters, 2004). They have directed their emphasis on the fact that inclusive education is a guiding philosophy that recognises diversity and individual differences as well as similarities (Peters, 2004). Therefore, diversity becomes a common denominator with valuable attributes, not an individual numerator.

Inclusive education policies and legislation have provided parents, disabled people, and schools committed to learning support, with the necessary conditions to challenge exclusion (Peters, 2004). This move has been strengthened in individual countries that will be part of this discussion. The implication of this for this research was that all considerations and discussions of learner support from a global perspective was anchored or aligned to inclusive education, inclusion, or education for all. The EFA policy framework and legislative support at the national level must be put in place as a necessary prerequisite to access equal participation in learning support activities. Learner support will be enacted through inclusive policy/practice as a guiding philosophy.

## **2.5. LEARNER SUPPORT OUTSIDE AFRICA**

This section is based on learner support in countries outside Africa, such as Canada, America and the Netherlands. These three countries formed part of this discussion

because they are developed, and in terms of resources, they are far more advanced than South Africa, where it would make sense to explore learner support based on comparative education. Berkhout (2014) states that comparative education focuses on comparisons of education in different countries, regions, and periods of history. She goes on to say that it is important to compare education systems, as these develop in the modern world. Canada, America, and the Netherlands are part of the modern world, and they were also part of the Salamanca conference held in Spain (1994), where the outcome of this conference reflected the United Nations' global strategy of education for all (EFA) (Farrell and Anisow, 2016). Inclusive education is now seen as central to the human rights and equal opportunities and priority policy objectives of the liberal democracies. Inclusion challenges all those policies and practices that serve to exclude some children from learning and attaining to their full potential. Article 23 of the (UNESCO, 1994: IX), stipulates that children should be helped to become as independent as possible, and to be able to take a full and active part in everyday life.

### **2.5.1. LEARNER SUPPORT IN CANADA**

### **2.5.2. INTRODUCTION: A MOVE TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CANADA**

Canada consists of 10 provinces and three Northern territories. Following UNESCO's 1994 Salamanca statement, Canada did not change towards inclusion, however, following the 2006 United Nations' convention for people with disabilities, the term inclusive education was specifically extended. Other educational systems adopted them and used them in their policy statements. One of the priorities of the government of Canada since 1994 has been to increase education access to its population. The population that will be highlighted in this section focuses on the government of Brunswick that has made moves to improve and strengthen inclusive education over a period of 20 years. Inclusive education became the official policy in New Brunswick as early as 1968, and was reinforced in 1985 by the Act to Amend the Schools Act. Since 1980, great progress has been made at many levels towards ensuring that New Brunswick schools are inclusive for all students (Brunswick Association for Living, 2007). The commitment made by the government ensured that Auxiliary Classes Act prior to 1986 represent a small portion of students served by learner support put in place for inclusive education.

Educators and education administrators recognise that each classroom presents a diverse variety of learners. Canada is often regarded as leading nation in the area of inclusive education (Bunch, 2015). However, most provincial governments leave the door to special education wide open, suggesting a lack of full commitment to global policy when it comes to student with disabilities. In these jurisdictions, educational inequity remains the norm (Campbell, 2016). New Brunswick encouraged schools that value diversity and this made it possible for the adoption of the universal curriculum equity.

### **2.5.3. UNIVERSAL CURRICULUM WITH EQUITY**

The quest of whole system educational improvement is to support all students to learn, all teachers to teach, all education leaders to lead, and all schools (and systems) to improve (Campbell, 2015). One province in particular, New Brunswick, has adopted inclusive education as a policy and practice, as have the other three Northern Territories when it comes to curriculum equity. The Canadian government has made it clear that inclusive education is for all students, no matter what differences exists among them, for example, the North West Territory (NWT) Education Act, which specifies that inclusive education is more than a method or a strategy, but that it is a way of life tied to a value system that values the value of diversity. It is intended to respond to individual needs and to assure equal access for all students to educational programmes offered in regular classrooms, and as such, in the NWT, inclusive education is mandatory (Bunch, 2015). The teacher must decide which aspects of the curriculum variables need to be adopted to suit the student's needs. Whatever decision is reached, all students learn in the same curricular area, under the same classroom teacher's instruction, and they work as a team, with the regular classroom teacher as a team leader (Bunch, 2015).

When it comes to inclusion, the primary consideration is the initial realisation that inclusive education is a more productive and asocial approach than is special education. Secondly, inclusive education is not achieved unless all students' study together in the same classroom of a regular system (Bunch, 2015), where they would receive learning support that respond to their diverse educational needs.



## **2.6. LEARNER SUPPORT IN AMERICA**

### **2.6.1. INTRODUCTION**

In the United States, inclusive education programmes have grown exponentially since the number of school districts reporting inclusive education programmes has tripled. A 1994 report of National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI) documented inclusion programmes in every state, at all grade levels, involving students across the entire range of disabilities (Peters, 2004). The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have (UNESCO, 1994).

### **2.6.2. AMERICA'S FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

The fundamental principle holds that all children should have the opportunity to learn together. Diversity is a characteristic that all children and youth have in common, both within each individual child and across individual children (Peters, 2004). There is strength in diversity, and all children have strengths. It is the fundamental responsibility of all those who teach and of all those who support teachers to build on children's strength, to believe in all children's capacity to learn, and to uphold their right to learn. Arietta and Chanute (2002) at the UN Special Session on Children rightfully state that: "We are not the sources of problems, we are the resources that are needed to solve them, we are not expenses, we are investments." They spoke for children, stating that children are not the problem, but they are a social resource, and we(teachers) should be able to understand/identify their strength and learning styles. The education system should also realise that children are not expenses, but are investments. Robertson and Tanis' assert that: "young people's voices can inspire and provide the impetus needed to re-energise the way teachers, professional educators and members of the public think about teaching and learning" (2013: 2).

### **2.6.3. INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN AMERICA**

In 1994, a Working Forum on Inclusive Schools identified the best practice for Inclusive Education, with the fundamental principle of the inclusive school being that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they

may have. Inclusive schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use, and partnerships with their communities (UNESCO, 1994). In response to UNESCO's call on inclusive education, the United States decided that there should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school (Peters, 2004).

On March 13, 2010, the Obama Administration released *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorisation of elementary and secondary Education Act* to describe a vision for reauthorisation of the 'No Child Left Behind' (NCLB) (Woolfolk, 2014). This was likely an attempt to ensure that all children are included in learning activities, and that no resources should be wasted. This entails supporting them and being sensitive to their diversity. Every effort is made to address all students' learning problems within the context of the regular classroom. SEN students are fully integrated with tutoring support. Students with more serious disabilities receive in-class assistance.

## **2.7. LEARNER SUPPORT IN NETHERLAND**

### **2.7.1. INTRODUCTION**

It is reported that in the Netherlands, almost 4% of all pupils aged 4-18 attend full-time special schools, the exact proportion of which varies with age. More recent national policy developments such as the National Policies for Education (2016) are attempting to this emphasis (Window-Farrell, 2015). The review aims to further advance the quality and equity of the Dutch Education system, as well as maintain and build on its current strengths. The report draws on key lessons from high performing and rapidly improving education systems, as well as on research and analysis.

The Netherlands operates what is called double standards, or what is referred to as 'double track': it allows learners with diverse educational needs to receive equal and excellent education in separate special schools, rather than in mainstream schools. The argument of the Dutch government is that even the UN conventions on the right of children

did not clarify where the children with diverse educational needs may receive their support. Article 28 of the UN convention on the rights of children asserts that every child has the basic right to education, and this should be provided on the basis of equal opportunity. So, according to the Dutch education system, as long as equal quality education is accessed by all children, this means that they are receiving support, and it does not necessarily mean they should be in a diverse classroom.

### **2.7.2. TEACHERS AND LEARNING SUPPORT.**

While more pupils perform according to their potential, the need is felt to provide additional support for low performing and under-achieving students (Berthold van Leiden et al., 2016). The excellence of the Netherlands education system is evidenced by its strong average performance in the programme for international student assessment (PISA). The Netherlands is known globally for its commitment to excellence, equity, and innovation (Schleicher, 2016).

### **2.7.3. THE STRENGTHS OF THE DUTCH EDUCATION SYSTEM**

In many respects, the Dutch education system stands out from the crowd. Within broad parameters set by government, schools have extensive freedom, with no national curriculum. In contrast to more “comprehensive” systems, students are “tracked” from around the age of 12.

The Dutch education system is a strong performer, with outcomes for cognitive skills that are both strong on average, as well as in terms of equity. These outcomes emerge from a system that balances a high level of decentralisation and school autonomy with a strong set of accountability measures. However, challenges remain, and the Netherlands rightly aims high. Early childhood education and care, while extensive, faces quality issues: the integrity of early tracking faces growing difficulties because of variations in the initial track selection, student motivation is low, and there are few really strong performers. As in all countries, the quality of teachers and school leaders is critical to educational performance, but collective learning and working is underdeveloped. School boards are not always accountable. The quality of education depends on the quality of staff. The vast

majority of Dutch teachers provide a good pedagogical climate for their students, explain things clearly, and are focused on helping students improve their learning. The Inspectorate of Education also finds that in many schools, teachers who are on school boards are committed (Netherlands Policies for Education, 2016).

## **2.8. LEARNER SUPPORT IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

Governments the world over, including that of Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, assembled at the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, and adopted six Education for All (EFA) goals, along with the Dakar Framework for Action. These countries were to take action to develop education in order to achieve the EFA goals by 2015 (Unhanging and Machawira, 2014).

The six goals of the (EFA) outlined below were adopted by the fore mentioned countries:

- to expand and improve early childhood care and Education (ECCE) for most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;
- to ensure that by 2015 all children particularly girl children in “difficulty circumstances” and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and can complete basic education that is free, compulsory and of good quality;
- to ensure that learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programme;
- to achieve 50% of improvement in levels of adult basic literacy by 2015 especially women and equitable access to basic and continuous education for all adults;
- to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by the year 2015 with a focus to ensuring full access to achievement in basic education of good quality; and
- To improve all aspects of quality of education and ensure excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes were achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, are part of the study because as neighbours to South Africa, they share borders, and there is a strong likelihood that their education system might have a bearing on South African education system and vice-versa.

### **2.8.1. LEARNER SUPPORT IN LESOTHO**

The ministry of Education and Training (MOET) established a special education unit to implement inclusive education in 1989/90, where the policy of inclusive education was further developed to promote the government to support the realisation of education for all. Lesotho views inclusive education as a system that welcomes and provides educational learning opportunities to all children, the able-bodied, as well as those living with disabilities. The Ministry of Education and Training implemented a Special Education Unit to improve inclusion. The government of Lesotho divides the learners with special needs in four categories, namely: physical, visual, learning, and intellectual impairment.

### **2.8.2. GOALS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND ITS BEARING ON LEARNING SUPPORT**

In 1987, King Shoshone II paved way for the Hlokomela Bana programme, to determine a means of educating the less fortunate and the category of learners needing support. Following this, Hlokomela Bana care for the children programme Lesotho put in place the policy of integrated education for all learners.

### **2.8.3. LESOTHO'S NEW INTEGRATED CURRICULUM FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) introduced a new integrated primary school curriculum designed to respond to the changing needs of Education in Lesotho.

The aims of the integrated curriculum were as follows:

- to enable the education system;

- to deliver education for individual and social development;

- to equip both individual and the nation to meet the challenges of the increasing globalisation world; and

to maintain the core values of identity of Basotho culture and society.

#### **2.8.4. MISSION OF THE INTEGRATED CURRICULUM IN LESOTHO**

The integrated curriculum aimed for:

- introduction of free compulsory basic education which is extended from seven to ten years;
- operations of citizens to meet the competition in the global world; and
- promotion of inclusive education for learners with diverse educational needs and achieve inclusive education in Lesotho schools.

In conclusion, the government of Lesotho is aiming for inclusive education strategies that are learner-centred. Training of educators from 80 primary schools in the country was a major strategy for the implementation of Inclusive education that is aligned to learning support.

#### **2.8.5. LEARNER SUPPORT IN SWAZILAND**

##### **2.8.6. INTRODUCTION**

In 2018, Swaziland introduced inclusive education, special needs and inclusive education in three teacher training colleges, namely: Wane, Zazaren and William Pitcher teacher's colleges. The government of Swaziland has a vision to provide sustainable, enriching and relevant education programmes for all learners with special education needs. Its mission is to promote inclusive education system where no child or youth with special education needs is excluded from education and training.

##### **2.8.7. POLICIES AND EDUCATION ACTS THAT EMBRACE (EFA)**

- Free Primary Education Act of 2010
- Guidelines for Establishment of Private Education Institutions
- HIV/AIDS Policy in Education Special Education Policy Statement 2009

- The - technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET'S D) of policy 2010
- The Higher Education Act 2012
- The National Education and Training Sector

In terms of Swaziland's proposed education agenda beyond 2015, it is important to note that as much as there has been progress towards the achievement of EFA, goals, most of the goals have not been achieved. There are still gaps that need to be filled thus the country's priorities and prospects beyond EFA 2015 centers around the gaps despite all the achievements, Swaziland encountered some challenges on the road to EFA 2015. The key challenges faced are as follows:

- low participation rate of age eligible children in Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes;
- lack of quality assurance in the provision of primary and secondary education;
- existence of a curriculum that is not entirely responsive to the labour market needs;
- inefficiencies in basic education resulting in high repetition and drop-out rates (above 10%)
- unattractive conditions of service for teachers;
- shortage of qualified teachers especially in Mathematics, Science and ICT; and
- mainstreaming special education in schools i.e., provision of facilities for disadvantaged children.

In conclusion, it can be stated that inclusive education in Swaziland is explicitly designed to address all issues pertaining to inclusion as is alluded by their vision and mission, which aims to provide sustainable learning programmes that will leave no child without proper learning support.

### **2.8.8. LEARNER SUPPORT IN ZIMBABWE**

### **2.8.9. INTRODUCTION**

Zimbabwe is a signatory of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for action on special needs education and several other inclusive educations related to international charters and conversions (Mpofu et al., 2007, Musengi et al., 2010, Chireshe, 2011), however it does not have a specific inclusive education policy. Nonetheless, it has inclusive education related policies, such as the Education Act of 1996.

### **2.8.10. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PROGRESS TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

UNESCO conducted a study of UN member states with regard to SEN legislation (1996). This study is one of two comprehensive reports of its kind. In this study, 52 UN member states responded to a questionnaire survey, where Zimbabwe was one of the countries that responded in the survey. Data from the study was summarised to ascertain the country with an appropriate education system. Zimbabwe's policy was one of the most comprehensive, it included: early detection, intervention, integration, and development of provision of support and monitoring services, as well as assistance for learners with learning difficulties (Peters, 2015). The comprehensive policy of Zimbabwe compares favorably to the South African (SIAS) policy. Just like her neighbours, Zimbabwe embraced (EFA) strategy for all children to learn and be supported especially at the early child development stage. The significance of the EFA strategies is that they embody conversions and protocols that generate guidelines and standards upon which to benchmark local educational practice (Munjanganja and Machawira, 2015). In some cases, the conventions are converted into remedial strategies that are used as the source of learning support activities.



### **2.8.11. ZIMBABWE'S VISION AND MISSION TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND LEARNER SUPPORT**

Zimbabwe does not have a specific inclusive policy, however it has inclusive education-related policies such as the Education Act of 1996, that has a **vision** and **mission** of inclusive education that advocates for non-discriminatory in the provision of education and non-discrimination of people with disabilities. Implementation of inclusive education in Zimbabwe is perceived to be presently affected by a lack of resources (Mpofu, 2000; Person et al., 2000; Mpofu et al., 2007; Musengi and Chireshe, 2012; Chireshe, 2013). Zimbabwe sought to redress lack of resources when the Ministries of Education Sport and Culture embarked on a number of activities towards the achievement of EFA goals through funding from UNESCO (Munjanganja and Machawira, 2014).

### **2.8.12. REMEDIAL MEASURES A MEANS IN PROMOTING LEARNING SUPPORT.**

There are perceptions that gaps in learning are due to teacher flight, absenteeism, and class boycotts (Munjanganja and Machawira, 2015). Lack of sufficient textbooks and other factors detract from learning. These are reported to be discovered in connection with mastery of reading, number and writing and communication skills (Gardner, 2016). To plug the gaps that are indicated by Munjanganja and Machawira above, UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, have introduced several remedial measures to tackle the detractors. The measures are in the form of the following programmes:

- Performance Lag Address Programme;
- Zimbabwe Early Learning Activity; and
- Accelerated Action Plan for MDGs.

Despite remedial measures that were drawn up to tackle detractors, drawbacks to achieving quality of education by 2015 remain, with some having been compounded by over the decade long socio-economic-politico challenges (Munjanganja and Machawira, 2014).

### **2.8.13. POLICIES AND ACTIONS TOWARDS ACHIEVING EFA**

The actions have included:

- conducting a situation analysis of EFA in Zimbabwe in 2003;
- conducting a situation analysis of adult literacy and non-formal education in Zimbabwe in 2004;
- adopting a national action plan of Zimbabwe in 2005;
- carrying out a mid-term evaluation in 2007; and
- preparing a progress report on achievement of the six EFA goals from 2006-2009.

Zimbabwe has since the 1980s declared education a human right and has adopted rights-based education legislation, regulations, and policies (Education Act, 1987); and (Manpower Planning and Development Act, 1996). The Education Act has not only made education a human right, and primary education free and compulsory, but has laid the foundation for expanding access and for removing all forms of discrimination, in particular discrimination based on race, gender, and religion.

Towards the action plan of Dakar framework of action, the two ministries of education have established partnership with education and development stakeholders like NGOs, churches, teacher unions, and UNICEF (Munjanja and Machawira, 2014). The partnership made by the two ministries saw dropouts and informal learners being co-opted into formal school learning programmes. Training of early childhood para-educators were kick-started, and this in itself is inclusive enough to align all learning support activities. The dropouts, the delinquent, and learners with learning difficulties were all given a second chance to enter into learning and development programmes that recognise their diverse educational needs.

### **2.8.15. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it can be said that despite resource constraints, low salaries and poor working conditions for teaching and ancillary staff the Ministries of Education tried their utmost level to capacitate the workforce by putting into place the 1999 presidential

commission inquiry into education and training (CIET) and the subsequent commitment to Dakar framework of 2000. These two great movements shed light on Zimbabwe as a country that advocates for inclusion and learner support.

## **2.9. SOUTH AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT OF AN INCLUSIVE PHILOSOPHY**

A historical background gives a glimpse into the previous educational dispensation and practices and this will help to deepen the understanding that Inclusive Education in South Africa has not developed in a vacuum (Education White Paper 6, 2001). South Africa embraced inclusive education with some difficulty, due to previous racial discrimination. There were racial policies that discriminated against blacks who were the majority, and impoverished by oppression (Landsberg et al., 2016). The majority of the segregated were black learners living in the rural areas. These learners consisted the majority out of the education system. Since 1994, the new democratic South Africa has been in a process of social, political, economic and educational transformation (The South African Constitution, 1996), outlines the mandates modus operandi of education, such as zero tolerance to any form of discrimination due to diversity which may likely lead to other learners not accessing proper or adequate learning facilities (DBE: 8and32). This is still the case today (Department of Basic Education, 2011), where the DBE acknowledges that 27000 learners are incorrectly referred to special schools. The result is that children are not accessing the correct learning support they need. This is a sad scenario, considering how South African educational system tries to embrace inclusion, yet there is still a large number of children who remain marginalised and excluded from regular schools.

## **2.10. SOUTH AFRICAN LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 8 of 1996), states that, it is the supreme law of the country and binds all schools to nature and protect fundamental human rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights (Landsberg, 2016:18), more specifically a commitment to children and education. The DBE (2013) developed a set of operational guidelines and strategies to facilitate systemic intervention and support. Through the

inception of inclusive education, it has been realised that all learners have the potential to learn. Support for learners with learning difficulties meant that no child will be excluded in order to ensure inclusivity, Draft National Disability Policy Framework (2008) was developed to work hand-in-hand with the policy from the UN on Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) (UNESCO 2006) policy was ratified by South Africa in 2007. This further reinforces the value of inclusive education system and promote the wellbeing of children (Landsberg et al., 2016). The Education White Paper 2001 acts as the guideline from which all inclusion and learner support is drawn.

Besides the publication of the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) school pack published in 2014, very few support packages or programmes have been published. The “SIAS document focuses mainly on support packages for learners” who are already in Grade One and upwards, with the result that educators of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres have been left to develop their own innovative ideas in designing support programmes and differentiating the curriculum for learners who experience barriers to learning. The National: Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (2001), was issued, however, no legislation has been passed to ratify this national policy, and very few law documents have been forthcoming on this topic (Landsberg et al., 2016).

The extent of needs of young children and families clearly reflect a complex scenario for intervention (Landsberg et al., 2016:119). The lack of a formalized policy document for the ECD leaves the practitioners with no tangible help to follow when rendering learner support.

Educators themselves need ‘support’, in order to provide support to learners who have learning difficulties. Therefore, there is a need to research the experiences of teachers as they try to implement learner support as it is stipulated in the Education White Paper 6, and other subsequent learning support document, such as the SIAS and CAPS.

Prior to the paradigm shift towards inclusive education, support at schools for learners who experience barriers to learning focused on developing the learner to meet the demands of the mainstream curriculum (Department of Education, 2001:5). However, the

curriculum itself was not differentiated significantly to meet the needs of these learners (Department of Education, 2015). With the implementation of inclusive education, educators at schools that cater for learners in the ECD have had to adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of their learners.

The limited number ECD schools in South Africa implies that many learners who cannot access ECD schooling are deprived of access to learner support services, leading to their marginalisation and exclusion from additional support (Department of Education, 2001). The foundation educators in Grades 1-3 will find it very difficult to support these learners, because they lack basic knowledge from the ECD. Accordingly, in the absence of formalised and structured support strategies, educators at these ECD schools have to devise and implement school and individual-based support strategies for such learners. Additional support in terms of curriculum differentiation is, therefore, vital if the learners are to succeed, since these learners need support just like any other learners in the foundation phase.

From the context of the preceding introductory discussion, the focus of this article is on exploring learner support and experiences of foundation phase teachers as they implement learning support. This research also investigated learner support in the South African education context. Finally, the study looks into the function of the SBST and the way in which it can be fine-tuned to support these learners. “In South Africa, inclusive education encompasses the recognition and respect of the differences among all learners and building on similarities, supporting all learners, so that the full range of learning needs could be met” (DOE, 2015).

“The important resource of policy formulation offers both creative solution and solid foundations to any teacher wishing to bring out the best from all their learners” (Nel and Hugo, 2016). An education system reflects the policy of the government of the day. “The policy of Learning support adopted by the South African government promotes education for all to enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they can develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society”

(Department of Education, 2015). The learning support guidelines were drawn from (The Education white paper 6, 2001).

## **2.11. THE WHITE PAPER 6**

“The Education White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System was launched amid much admiration as an important educational event by the late Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal in 2001”. “This policy advocated an inclusive approach to education and provides clear guidelines on enrolling learners as well as acknowledging the central role played by parents and teachers” (Education White Paper 6, 2001:7). One major principle outlined in the Education White Paper 6 is “the focus on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting full range of learning needs”.

The purpose for which the White Paper 6 was constructed is for inclusive education which unequivocally states that: Official documents are abundant in organizations and take many forms: SIAS and CAPS are such documents. These documents describe the success of learner support through adhering to the principles of support (SIAS, 2014:15). The White Paper 6 depicts inclusion as the centre that holds the essence of learner support interact. In this study it implies that no child must be left behind (NCLB), The Obama Administration of (2010) as quoted in Woolfolk, (2014:23) bears testimony to this claim. Furthermore, it categorically means that in a Foundation Phase classroom” that reflects the diversity of students, learner support should be tailored to fit their backgrounds: social organization, cultural values, learning preferences and sociolinguistic” (Woolfolk, 2014). The researcher had an intention of exploring how documents such as the White Paper 6 and SIAS describe the functions and values of how teachers and other stakeholders define or perceive learner support. The White Paper 6 and SIAS explain how learner support should be given to children at the early stage with special reference to the SIAS needs analysis.

“However, the impressive policies and objectives encapsulated in the White Paper require appropriate support strategies to ensure that the outcomes of the envisaged policy are achieved in teaching and learning programmes”. The most crucial aspect of the Education White Paper 6 is the need for government to provide the necessary support for learners.

However, this support has not been forthcoming in the manner outlined in the policy document. According to the Education White Paper 6, “equitable practice in terms of admission, support and funding will be enabled”. For the purpose of this research, focus was on foundation phase teachers’ experiences as they render support that recognises the diverse needs of learners. Learning support activities are drawn up in the SIAS policy.

## **2.12. The SIAS POLICY**

The SIAS Policy “aims to respond to the needs of all learners in our country, particularly those who are vulnerable and most likely to be marginalised or excluded: Minister of Basic Education”, (2014). The purpose of the SIAS policy is “to provide the framework for procedures to identify, assess and provide programmes for learners who require additional learner support” (DBE, 2014). The main purpose of the policy is” to manage and support teaching and learning processes for learners, hence strategies that promote learner support and enhance participation and inclusion will be explored in this research”. The DBE also states that “the SIAS policy directs the system on how to plan, budget and programme support at all levels. The policy specifically aims to identify barriers to learning”. The identification process will also provide background information on learner in need of the support, thus, information about intervention strategies that educators are undertaking to implement learner support will be executed. Teacher capacity is a crucial matter when it comes to support of learners with learning difficulties. The purpose for which the SIAS were constructed will be utilised in greater detail and this entails how teachers address learner diversity through following principles of support stipulated in the SIAS.

## **2.13. PRINCIPLES OF SUPPORT;**

The following principles of support adapted from (SIAS, 2014:15-16), are outlined as follows:

-i). holistic approach that addresses barrier to learning and assist learner to gain access to learning.

- ii). increase in capacity to respond to diversity thus learning contexts and lessons become accessible to learners.
- iii). review of cultures, policies and practices that are sensitive to learning care and support.
- iv). Focus should be on identifying learner, teacher and school needs.
- v). support packages should consist of a range of support provisions of differing intensity.
- vi). support can be provided on a range of continuum of intensity, from low to high.
- vii). support delivery can be minimised to be cost effective.
- viii). involvement of all staff in rendering support.
- ix). identification of five specific provision of support which are:
  - . support staff
  - . LTSM and assistive devices
  - . curriculum differentiation
  - . on-going empowerment through workshops and guidance.
  - . environment accessibility
- x). determination of a support package depends on the quality of assessments and all role players such as learners, parents and teachers.
- xi). evaluation of support resources available at the school or department of education.

The principles of support adapted from the SIAS policy document hinge their worthiness on assessment policy which is directly drawn from CAPS.



## **2.14. CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENTS (CAPS)**

One of the five specific support provision is curriculum differentiation, this entails “the quality of assessments that will be administered during learning support”. “The assessment does not refer to scholastic achievement but to assessment to determine barriers to learning”, (DBE, 2015). In this study, the strategies used in implementing support should be in line with the principles of assessment which are outlined as follows:

## **2.15. PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT.**

- purpose of assessment should be clear and open.
- assessment needs to be appropriate and relevant.
- assessment needs to be fair and bias free.
- assessment must be valid
- assessment needs to be reliable and constant.
- assessment must be manageable
- assessment must test what it is intended to test.
- assessment needs to be continuous.

“Any assessment request from the teacher to the SBST and from SBST to the DBST must stipulate the nature of assessment query and motivation for such an assessment”, (SIAS, 2014:16). Teachers must always take cognisance of the principles of assessment whenever they render support to learners with learning difficulties.

In this study, the focus will be mainly on learner support and experiences that teachers undergo as they endeavour to implement support to learners through everything and everyone that is involved in the support levels. Everyone constitutes all stakeholders involved in learning support such as parents, learners and teachers. Everything entails learning teaching and support materials(LTSM) as well assistive devices like hearing aids,

reading aids, laptops typewriters etc. If curriculum is not implemented according to the principles of assessment outlined in the previous section, then it becomes the most significant barrier to learning.

## **2.16. BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

Barriers to learning refer to difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or within the learner him/herself which prevent access to learning and development for learners (DBE, 2010). A barrier to learning is not considered a mental illness as such, with its own unique signs and symptoms. It is a term for identifying groups of people who need social support and special educational services to carry out the normal tasks of everyday living (DBE, 2015). According to the (Department of Education ,2015), the concept 'barriers to learning' refers to all the systemic, societal, and pedagogic and intrinsic factors that impede learning and development (Department of Education,2011). Barriers to learning may arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or within the learner him/herself: these prevent access to learning and development for learners (Department of Education, 2008:8). In this research systemic barriers seem to have a direct bearing on teachers' experiences in implementing learner support.

## **2.17. SYSTEMIC BARRIERS**

Systemic barriers are barriers created by the education system itself. Some of the systemic barriers in the Southern African context are: overcrowding in classroom, language of learning and teaching (LoLT), insufficient training of teachers and lack of assistive devices. The following is a brief discussion of some of the systemic barriers experienced in South African schooling context.

### **-i. Overcrowding in classrooms**

Overcrowded classrooms of 40+, even up to 70 learners per classroom for example pose challenges with regard to discipline problems. Individual attention to learners' needs is an added stressor for teachers dealing with a variety of contextual challenges in a classroom with a diversity of need (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Inclusion is a complex concept which

is viewed by authorities from differing points such as interaction of humans and on the other hand as organisational structures that are meant to improve schools. Therefore, the large class size will be detrimental to learner support. Teachers in overcrowded classrooms become managers of group dynamics rather than purveyors of knowledge (Engelbrecht and Green,2015). The larger classes mean that teachers need to brace themselves for more complex planning and learner support will be compromised because learners in a big classes come from diverse backgrounds where they speak different languages that differ from the LoLT

-ii. Inappropriate language of learning and teaching (LoLT).

Inappropriate language of learning and teaching (LoLT). is a major stumbling block if the teacher needs to structure multiple opportunities for peer to peer interaction as they develop academic language (Tinotelcommunications, 2016)? The teacher and the children must be well vested in the language that will be used as the medium of instruction. Language is an important tool for gaining access to knowledge and developing communication skills, (Botha, UNISA, 2011). Botha is of the opinion that, the uncertain, self-conscious teacher will find it very difficult to inspire children in the class to speak, this uncertainty is made worse by teachers who lack expertise in learner support.

-iii. Insufficient training of educators

Insufficient training of educators to manage diversity in their classroom, hinders learner support in the classroom. The teachers lack capacity to implement inclusive education which includes insufficient resources and unrealistic workloads. It is teachers' continuing personal interpretations in dynamic interaction with contextual issues that determine the way in which inclusion is enacted in their classrooms, as well as how they teach and support learners, (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel, and Tlale,2015).

To teach in inclusive schools, teachers' pre-service training and in-service experience need to equip teachers with a common vision; a conceptual framework and language of inclusion and teaching skills; and inclusive classroom practices to cope with learners with diverse needs (Swart and Pettipher,2016).

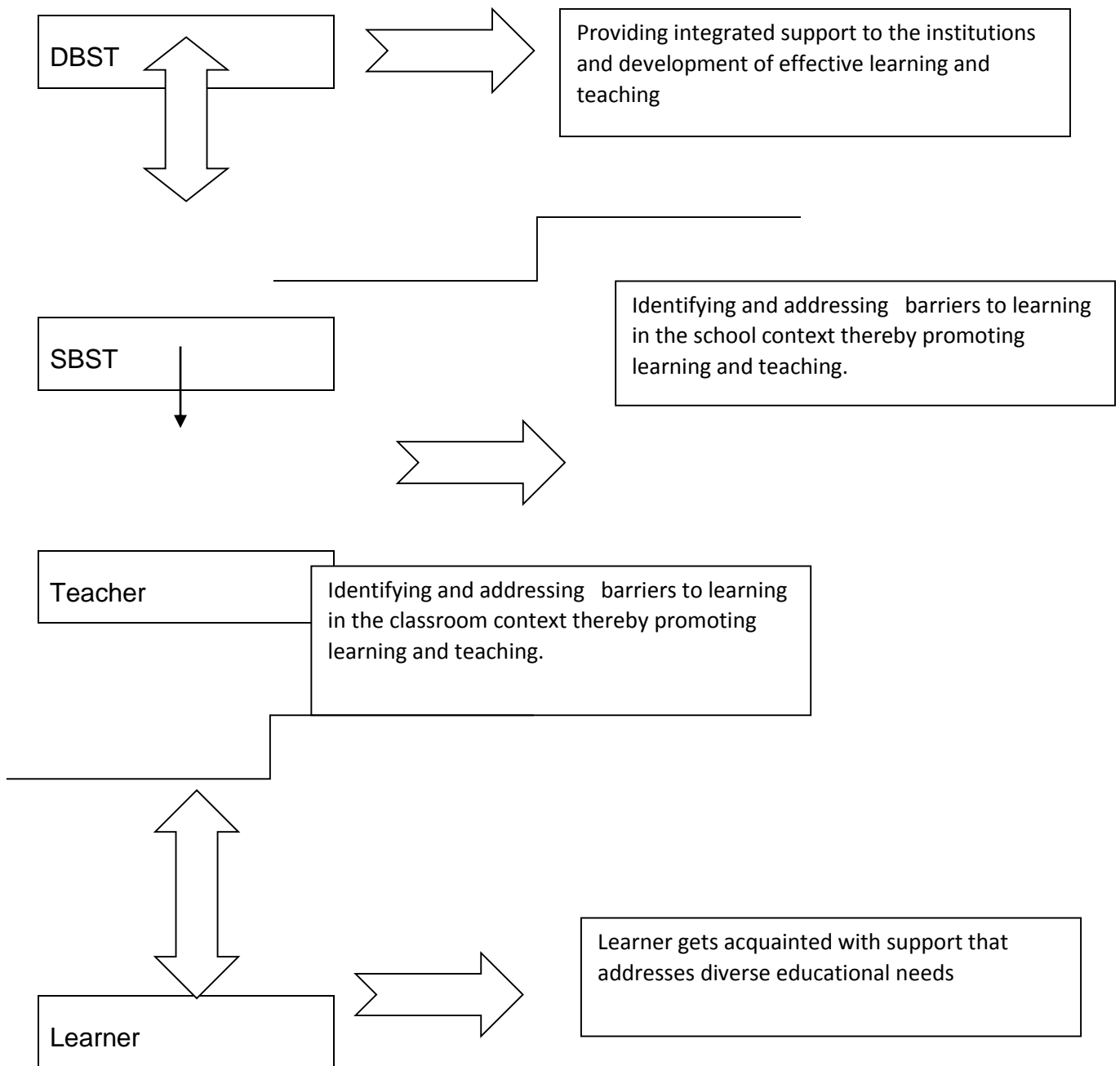
The form of teaching is undoubtedly challenging (Bartell, 2013; Gregson, 2013). Another major issue is how the department of education is responding to learner support by implementing SIAS. Stakeholders that are associated with SIAS include the teachers themselves, SBST and DBS. The teachers need to be provided with teacher-developed classroom- based on interventions to address the support needs of identified learners, (DBE, 2014). SBST need time to review teacher-developed support plans in respect of additional strategies to strengthen learner support (SIAS, 2014:17). The DBST has to respond to requests for assistance from the SBST, however the response is not always timeous and this in most cases has repercussions with ripple effect regarding learner support. Another systemic barrier that seems to be impacting negatively on learner support is assistive devices.

#### -iv. Lack of funds for assistive devices

Lack of funds for assistive devices, such as; hearing aids, typewriters and or teaching assistants. An alternative and adaptive method of assessment for learners in support is vital. Some learners who need support will be experiencing barriers to learning and need specialised learning equipment in order for them to benefit in any support that is rendered by the teacher. Assistant teachers will ease the process of identifying learners in need of support and provision of assessment and therapy support. It is a known fact that most foundation phase classes in public schools in Johannesburg district have no assistant teachers and this makes the workload of a foundation phase teachers cumbersome and teachers often feel overwhelmed, thus the quality of learner support will be compromised, (Singhal, 2009), alludes that, there is no incentive in the form of weighting or increased subsidy for mainstream schools or ECD centres.

The following section provides an insight into the scope of learner support at the district and school level as highlighted in Fig 2.

## **2.18. SCOPE OF LEARNER SUPPORT FROM DISTRICT LEVEL DOWN TO THE LEVEL OF THE LEARNER.**



(The structure was adapted from Johannesburg North District workshop PIET PAN Vuren School: Gauteng Department of Education 2017, modified to suit:(Foundation phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support)

Education White Paper 6 refers to the establishment of institutional-level support teams (Department of Education, 2001:29). The function of these support teams will be to coordinate learner and educator support services by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs (Department of Education, 2001:29). Furthermore, district support teams will provide the full range of education support services, such as professional development in curriculum and assessment, to these institutional-level support teams (Department of Education, 2001:29). The levels of learner support in SA falls into basically four levels namely: national, provincial, district, school-based support team. In this study a comprehensive analysis will be on the SBST support level as it is the one that is directly linked to learner support in the classroom.

### **2.19. DBST**

The District based support team provides integrated support to educational institutions to support development of effective teaching and learning. It also approves, with conditions or recommendations different support which is given, monitored and reviewed (DBE, SIAS, 2014:38). The approval from the DBST will be cascaded down to the schools by the facilitators that are disseminated by the department of education. The support is given to schools at workshops that are randomly held at different schools. It is hoped that teachers will be empowered to identify and address barriers to learning in the school context thereby promoting learning and teaching by also empowering teachers at school level developmental workshops.

### **2.20. SBST**

At the school level, instead of diagnosing the learner we begin by diagnosing the instruction. We identify flaws in the instruction and correct them (Engelman and Carmine, 2016). This implies that the educator's must first of all analyse the methods of teaching before they put the blame on the learners. If irregularities in the method of instructions

are ironed out first, then educators will invest in the strengths of the learners and support them meaningfully in accordance to their diverse needs. The School Governing Body (SGB), is the major component in day to day running of the school. It is also an integral part of the school-based support team. The SGB are the governors of the school and they engineer parent and learner liaison. When support needs are identified, parent and learner consultations are triggered; thereafter support strategies are drawn up and will be implemented.

Therapist Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist, NGO and other stakeholders, for example, Department of Health, Social Development and other relevant departments, just like the SGB are part of the SBST, however it is regrettably a sad fact that; Therapist, Psychologists, Occupational therapist and other stakeholders from health and social development are not found in most public schools in Johannesburg District. It means that the SBST in most schools in Johannesburg District are operating without a full complement of members.

The School based school team is responsible for identifying and addressing barriers to learning in the local context, thus effective teaching and learning. So if it is under resourced it means that learner support is compromised. The learner is the center in the support structure at the school, and if the teacher renders support that support should respond to the diverse needs, then the learner gets optimal understanding and can achieve to the maximum potential. Carl's model of curriculum design places the child at the Centre of everything that transpires in learning and teaching (Carl, 2012:78), (2014). The honors is upon the SBST to ensure that when they support teachers there is clear understanding of what the design entails in order to ensure that learner support is not misconstrued.

## **2.21. THE TEACHER**

The role of a teacher as curriculum agent, (Carl, 2014), places him/her on appointments where she /he must optimize teaching and learner support events in the classroom. (Vygotsky, 1978), argues that a learner has development potential which manifests itself in what he can achieve with the help of a more capable person. A key concept within the

theory is the zone of proximal development which represents the level of development immediately above the learner's present level. Tasks within the zone of Proximal developments are ones that a learner can only do with the assistance of adults or more capable peers and involves utilizing the learner's strengths. Much of Vygotsky's work provides a useful academic foundation for other theorists in the field of inclusive education, in this research; the teacher will be the more capable adult who provide an account of implementing learner support in the diverse foundation phase classroom.

### **2.23. THE LEARNER**

Learner-oriented evaluation is mainly adapted to determining to what extent learners have made progress on the road to goal realisation (Carl, 2014:100). Learners can develop a feeling of interdependence in the classroom if their diversity is treated with the respect it deserves. As earlier alluded to in the study, learner support is not only when the teacher assists learners with learning difficulties, but also when they realize that they have to share not only in their learning process but also in the learning process of others within their environment. An understanding especially of learners' proximal process of interaction in their environment is essential underpinning the ways to master support in their world (Landsberg, 2016). What this entails is that when learners' diverse world is understood, their needs will be met. The teachers will explore and negotiate feasible strategies and levels of support that will determine their need of enablement (Seaside, 2014).



## 2.24. CONCLUSION

Research findings on inclusive education from various authorities indicate that many countries have adopted the policy of inclusive education. (UNESCO, 1994; DBE, 2014; Singhal, 2008 and Nell et, al., 2016), indicate that learner support is provided in order for learners to attain to their full potential and it justifies the need to carry out a research on Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing Learner support. Research findings of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, (Landsberg et.al., 2016:10 and 14), reveal that the major challenge of inclusion is to understand the complexity of influences, interactions and interrelationships between the individual learner and multiple other systems.

"The Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of development can also be used as a conceptual tool for understanding classrooms, teacher's practices, schools and families by viewing them as systems in themselves" (Donald, Lazarus and Miller, 2014). Therefore, the model directs practitioners towards multi-level assessment intervention and prevention (Thereon and Donald, 2013). Research in this field is therefore justified as it aims to provide answers to the research questions: "What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District?"

"What are foundation phase teachers 'experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms?"

"How do foundation phase teachers provide learning support?"

"What strategies can enhance learner support in foundation phase?"

Research on Learner support (UNESCO, 1994: Department of Education 2014); indicate that the provision of early Identification, Screening, Assessment and support, (SIAS) is fundamental if support in foundation phase has to be meaningful. The conclusion on this chapter shows the fact that there is need for research to be carried out as gaps in research exists on how support is given in diverse Foundation Phase classrooms and what is stipulated in the Education White paper 6. The next chapter will explore the procedures

engaged in solving the researcher's title: "Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District". Qualitative methodology data collection and research design will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the research methodology employed in a case study of one school which followed a qualitative approach to investigate Foundation Phase teachers' experience in implementing learner support in diverse classrooms. The focus of this chapter is on the description and discussion of the research design and methodology used in collecting data on experiences of foundation phase teachers in implementing learner support in a diverse classroom in Johannesburg North District. The chapter describes the research process that informed this study and gives details of the choice of the research, paradigms, approach, design and sampling of participants. The chapter also provides a detailed description of data collection processes, explaining how issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research were discussed. The chapter begins by describing the research paradigm, which are interpretive: ontological and epistemological standpoint and methodological paradigm. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also discussed. The chapter concludes by explaining the importance of the study to the broader context.

#### **3.2. THE RESEARCH PARADIGM**

“A research paradigm is a model or pattern, according to which the social scientists view the objects of research” (Kuhn, in Mouton and Marais 1996:150). Kuhn (1962) first used the word paradigm to mean a philosophical way of thinking. According to (McKenzie and Knipe in Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017:26), “in educational research the term paradigm is used to describe the researcher' worldview”. “The purpose of research and how it will be conducted are all influenced by the researcher's paradigmatic beliefs”, (Mahlo, 2011:79). “A paradigm constitutes what must be studied in a particular setting, what research questions should be answered in the study, and the way in which those questions will be

analysed and interpreted through the collected data”, (Makgakga, 2016:83). These four aspects of philosophy are seen to be related to as a paradigm and to themselves as well which assist in defining the delimitation or boundaries of the research. The boundaries of the study are established in order to inform how the researcher ought to behave or what she ought to focus on in conducting successful research. The definitions mentioned above suggest that paradigms can either consciously or subconsciously set the rationale and expectations of the study (Makgakga, 2016:83). Kuhn in Hatch (2002:498), identified, four research paradigms namely critical feminist, constructivist, positivist and post-positivist. These paradigms are based on the argument that schools of scientific thought reach paradigm status when they have generated answers to the following questions:

- “What are the fundamental entities of which the universe is composed?”
- “How do these interact with each other and the senses?”
- “What questions can legitimately be asked about such entities and what techniques are employed in seeking solutions”, (Hatch, 2002:498)

According to Creswell (2013:17), a paradigm is a set of beliefs that guide actions regarding ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology”. “*ontology*” raises the basic questions about the nature of reality. The second is “*epistemology*”, which poses the questions, how do we know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? The third is “*axiology*” which its meaning embedded in the branch of philosophy dealing with ethics, aesthetics, and religion) a part of the basic foundational philosophical dimensions of paradigm proposal. Arguably, axiology has been “defined out” of scientific inquiry for no larger a reason than that it also concerns religion (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018:229-230). The expansion of basic issues to include axiology, then, is one way of achieving greater congruence among the various interpretivist inquiry models. The fourth is the” methodology, which focuses on how we gain knowledge”, (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:185)

The following are brief discussions of the paradigms:

-i. Critical/feminist paradigm

“Critical theory is based on the premise that ontologically; it is historical realism that has a clear construction formed in the flow of history social, political, economic, moral and gender factors”. Epistemologically the researcher and the studied phenomenon have some interactions with each other in that the others value affect the study (Ashley and Chitsaz, 2014:109-110). Cohen et, al. (2018:9) also support Ashlaghy and Chitsaz in stating that critical theory is concerned with analysis of power and ideology, emancipatory and politically oriented and activist. Critical theory may refer to qualitative or quantitative research.

#### -ii. Positivist paradigm

“Positivism refers to an evidence-based reality that can be mathematically interpreted. It was coined in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by (Comte, 1759). Positivism might refer to quantitative research since it uses numbers”. Quantitative research methods use the principle of positivism. A *positivist paradigm* is described as the study of human behaviour and actions and assumes that science quantitatively measure facts about a single apprehensible reality (Healy and Perry, 2000:118). Positivists believe that reality is stable, and is described from an objective viewpoint (Levin, 1988:186). In other words, the researcher does not interfere with the phenomenon that is being studied. Positivists imply a stance as an observer of social reality (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018:10-11). Positivists test hypotheses that are based on what has been observed in the experiment previously and explain realities and their inter-relationships. Krauss (2005:764) indicates that positivists believe that the objective of knowledge is to describe the phenomena under study, where observations and measurements are the core of scientific endeavour.

#### -iii. Post-positivist paradigm

Creswell (2014:7) has emphasised that “post-positivism starts the research with theory, travelling to the research site to collect data, in order to support or refute a theory, and then revises the process, to conduct additional tests”. The post-positivism challenges the positivism view of the world, while it embraces the scientific nature of positivism, it recognises that there is no absolute truth or at least one that is discoverable by humans. It advocates for probability (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018:16).

#### -iv. Constructivist/interpretative paradigm

Constructivism is typically viewed as qualitative research, because the research question(s) are broad, or general, for the participants to construct their meaning about the situation through the interactions with others (Creswell, 2014:8). The interpretivist paradigm is described as constructivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018:). Positivist and other paradigms are not relevant for this study as they focus more on scientific gathering, determining predicting and controlling as well as criticism, change reforming and releasing (Ashlaghy and Chitsaz 2014:109). While the positivist approach relies on a single objective reality that is orderly and predictable, researchers who work within an interpretivist paradigm believe that each individual constructs their own view of the world based on experiences and perceptions (Sepeng 2010:47). According to Creswell (2014:37) Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things. Constructivist paradigm is employed in this study because assumptions identified in this work hold that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meaning of their experiences and that meaning is directed towards certain objects or things (Creswell, 2014:37).

### **3.2.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

The terms constructivist, constructivism, interpretivist, and interpretivism are used interchangeably in literature, but their meanings are shaped by the intent of the users. Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:200). In this study, it is argued there are multiple realities as everyone's perceptions are important and valid, with one person's interpretation about an issue different from that of another. Furthermore, reality is mutually and socially constructed, and a diversity of interpretations can be made. In this research, each Foundation Phase Teacher has the technical know-how, the knowledge of which can therefore only be shared by exploring their views, meanings, experiences and actions.

Using constructivism paradigm helped the researcher to investigate the constructions or broad meanings about experiences of Foundation Phase teachers, with reference to the implementation of learner support. In addition, the researcher wished to become immersed in the social-context (school) and observe the experiences and actions of Foundation Phase Teachers in the implementation of learner support. Therefore, the researcher explored their experiences and behavior. Using 'social constructivism', the researcher acknowledged that the experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers are socially constructed, not given. the central endeavours in the context of interpretative paradigm will include the meanings and purposes of those people who are their sources.

According to social constructivism, norms and shared beliefs comprise actors' identities and interests, for example, the way people conceive themselves in relation to others (Creswell, 2014:8). Their perspectives are socially and historically constructed. In a school context, it implies that the mutual beliefs between, learners, classroom teachers, and principals define themselves. Individuals cannot be isolated from the environment in which they live, thus the researcher can interpret individuals in conjunction within their environment. Hence, Foundation Phase Teachers cannot be isolated from the environment in which they work, that is the school and the classroom in which they are implementing learner support.

Qualitative data analysis – as qualitative research in general can take three approaches to analysing social phenomena. A first approach puts subjective experiences as the focus: A second approach focuses on describing the making of a social situation: A third approach is to go beyond the first two approaches and into spheres of publications with the aim of theory development. In that period, data analysis was driven by various ways of coding for materials often obtained from participant observation (Flick, 2013 :6-7). There are three famous research approach that can be followed by the researcher, namely mixed methods, Quantitative and Qualitative approach. In a *quantitative* study, control of all components in the action and representations of participants is executed by the researcher and there is the scientific testing of hypotheses and standardised data-collection that usually from a large number of respondents amenable to statistical analysis (Creswell, 2014:41-43).In *qualitative* studies, the data is collected through examining

Qualitative public documents (e.g., newspapers, minutes of meetings, official reports) or private documents (e.g., personal journals and diaries, letters, e-mails), qualitative observation when the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. In these field notes, the researcher records, in an unstructured or semi structured way (using some prior questions that the inquirer wants to know), activities at the research site, qualitative interviews, where the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group. These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2014:294 Cohen et al., 2018:316). *Mixed* methods approach is a study that combines both qualitative and quantitative techniques and/or data analysis within the different phases of the research process (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:4). In this study the researcher used qualitative approach, the next section is the description of qualitative approach.

### **3.3. QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

This study followed a qualitative research approach because qualitative approach focuses on phenomena that occur in natural settings-that is in the real world. And they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity. Qualitative researchers rarely try to simplify what they observe, they recognize that the issue they are studying has many dimensions and layers, and so they portray the issue in its multifaceted form (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:135). According to Krauss (2005:758-770), many qualitative researchers operate under different ontological assumptions about the world. They do not assume that there is a single unitary reality apart from one's perceptions each person experiences the world differently. Hence in this research, the researcher did not rely on information from one foundation phase teacher but from several information that the teachers provided in their natural classroom settings. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand a phenomenon in a specific context. For



the purpose of this study the phenomena that needs to be understood is experiences of teachers as they implement learner support in the foundation phase classroom.

The researcher did not attempt to influence or manipulate the phenomena. Qualitative research is essentially 'exploratory'—namely, it sets out to describe, understand, and explain a particular social phenomenon. People construct meanings in life and share their interpretations of such meanings with others through communication (Lee and Krauss, 2015:2). Similarly, qualitative research uses face-to-face interactions with participants to elicit and negotiate meanings. In other words, through the communicative and interpretative process of deep reflection, meaning that is hidden 'inside' the participant is brought to the surface. Thus, what distinguishes qualitative research methods from quantitative methods is the centrality of the interaction between investigator and participant (Lee and Krauss 2015:2). This is because participants are not objects, but human beings who can speak and think for themselves and who can define things from their own points of view.

Qualitative researchers believe that the researcher's ability to interpret and make sense of what she/ he sees is critical for understanding any social phenomenon (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:135). The research took place in a natural setting and the researcher had face-to-face interaction with the participants over time. The Importance of Qualitative research in the context of the study is in the fact that it enabled the researcher to find the possible solution to the problem in a diverse foundation phase classroom and how learners are provided with support at a primary school in Johannesburg district.

A researcher who is acquainted with a quantitative approach would criticise this approach as it does not have the ability to generalise the findings to the entire population. In contrast a quantitative approach might use a questionnaire to gather the perceptions, beliefs and practices of a sample. Qualitative researchers believe that behaviour is best as it occurs without external constraints and control however the researcher becomes immersed in the phenomenon being studied and the risk of bias and human error is eminent (Creswell, 2014:242, MacMillan and Schumacher, 2014:346). However, for this study, the main aim

was not to generalise the findings to individuals, sites or places outside those under study (Creswell, 2009:193), but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of how Foundation Phase teachers experience the implementation of learner support in Johannesburg North District, with reference to Gauteng.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

“A research design is analogous to a plan or a map used in the process of finding solutions to the research problem”, (Merriam, 1998:44), “and foregrounds all the decisions made in undertaking the study”, (De Vos, 2011:268). The designs used by qualitative researchers will differ, depending on the purpose of the study, the nature of the research question and the skills and resources available to the researcher. In addition, each of the possible designs has its own procedures and perspectives, reflected in the research process selected. There are no fixed rules to follow, or step-by-step guides to qualitative research design, but rather the choices and actions of the researcher determine the strategy. Accordingly, “the researcher created the strategy best suited for the research and designed the entire research project around it”, (Fouche in De Vos, 2011:268).

In qualitative studies there are several designs that can be used. Action research is -a cyclic research which follows development procedure that moves from problem to goal and then moves forward by revising action or both. While ethnography seeks to follow the process of observing individuals or groups either as participant or non-participant, records and structures are analysed. Phenomenology is used to study the experience from the participants’ point of view, while grounded theory sees data collected in a natural setting. Content analysis identifies the specific characteristics of a body of material. A case study seeks to understand one person or situation in great depth, it is an an investigation of a single instance, usually with the goal of identifying and perhaps understanding how an issue came into being and how it was resolved (Devos et al., 2017).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018:375), a case study constitutes an approach to research. A case study might include action research, surveys, participatory research or historical research. The aim of this study was to understand the experience of Foundation Phase teachers in the implementation of learner support; therefore, a case

study was appropriate. By using a case study design, the researcher was able to understand the point of view of foundation phase teachers. and their direct experiences of implementing learner support in the Foundation Phase. This concurs with the view of DeVos et al. (2017:144) that the purpose of a case study is to understand experiences from a participant's point of view. A case study provide a unique example of real people in real situation enabling them to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them with abstract ideas(Cohen et al., 2018:376).For the purpose of this study, a case study design was undertaken as Foundation Phase teachers experiences were elicited and the researcher wished to suggest guidelines that would regulate their practice, in particular their experiences in the Foundation Phase in the implementation of learner support.A case study seeks to understand one person or situation in great depth, so in this research, the researcher sought to understand the situation of teachers' experiences regarding learner support.The design assisted the researcher to gain insight into the problem by investigating foundation phase teachers as they try to implement learner support. The researcher investigated the educator's view of experiences of learner support and how they interpret it. A brief explanation on the reasons for undertaking a case study is that qualitative case study involves a study of individuals in their natural setting. The researcher can tell the story from the point of view of the participants rather than an expert who passes judgement on participants. In short a distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research is that behaviour is studied as it occurs naturally (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2014). Cohen et al. (2018:379), concur with MacMillan and Schumacher when they stipulate that in a case study, data is presented in a more accessible way language and form of presentation is not complicated and it allows the reader to judge implication of the study themselves.

### **3.4.1. CASE STUDY**

There are many opinions about a case study. "A case has unique characteristics that are consistent with its strengths that establishes cause and effect (how and why) indeed one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect and that in depth and understanding is

required to do justice to a case” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018:376). A case relates to understanding and interpreting the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives (Fouche in De Vos, 2011:270), and a particular individual programme, or event is studied in depth for a defined period of time e.g. a medical researcher may study illness for particular patient, politician may study a particular campaign or an educator may study and analyse instructional strategies that a master teacher uses to teach history (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:137). In the context of this study, the researcher used a case to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives of implementing learner support. (Fouche in De Vos, 2011:270), concurring with Leedy and Ormrod ‘s argument, the researcher also used a case study to study in depth for a period the Foundation Phase teachers’ experiences in implementing learner support to struggling learners in a diverse foundation classroom. The constructivist paradigm upon which this qualitative research is built assumes that reality as interpreted by individuals is characterised using systematic procedures but maintain that there are multiple socially constructed realities (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:14).

According to Cohen et. al. (2018:376), a case study enables readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles fit together. In keeping with the aim of the study, namely, to explore the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers’ in the implementation of learner support in diverse classroom it was necessary to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives, especially the direct experiences of supporting learners in a diverse foundation phase classroom.

### **3.5. POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

According to Merriam (1998), “sampling refers to the process or techniques of selecting representative part of the population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population”.

#### **3.5.1. POPULATION**

The targeted population in this study comprised all teachers in Foundation Phase and their respective learners in Johannesburg North District in Gauteng province. The schools have been declared underperforming and are currently receiving support from the

Department of Education under a programme called Gauteng Province literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS). Some of the teachers are not qualified to teach diverse Foundation Phase learners, holding only senior primary diplomas that have nothing to do with Foundation Phase education. The learners that attend these schools are coloured, from the local community and they speak Afrikaans as their home language, and a few black children who travel from nearby black suburbs. whose home languages is a rich mixture of the local indigenous languages such as isiZulu, Setswana, Sepedi, Sesotho etc. However, what is interesting is that for both coloured and black children, the language of learning and teaching is English, which they do not speak at home. The economic status of both the local coloured community and the neighboring black community are characterised by poverty.

During the period of this research was conducted there were 269 primary schools in Johannesburg North District in Gauteng Province (DBE, 2006:10), with 32 primary schools in the cluster from which the research was conducted. The cluster was selected because it constitutes mainstream schools that occasionally receive workshops from the DBST to support learners who have reading, writing, and mathematical problems. The school in the study was singled out for the research because it comprises many Foundation Phase classrooms, which are characteristically overcrowded. This prompted the researcher to carry out the research to determine how the Foundation Phase teachers cope with learner support in such overcrowded classrooms, which are characterised by immense diversity.

### **3.5.2. SAMPLING**

The notion behind sampling is that a small set of observations can be expected in the total population of the study (De Vos et al., 2011:390). In purposive sampling, the researcher must first think critically about parameters of the population and then choose the sample case accordingly (De Vos et al., 2017:392). Hence four Foundation Phase teachers were chosen, as the research is studying their experiences as inclusive practitioners offering learner support. According to Creswell (2007:125, 2014), purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research and participants and site selection can purposefully inform an understanding of the research. Purposive sampling does not

include accessible or convenient sampling, but incorporates those from which the most can be learned, and who would most accurately help the researcher to answer the research question (Silverman, 2000:105; Silverman, 2016).

The Foundation Phase was selected, because it is regarded as the critical stage for promoting an interest in education and developing positive attitudes towards schooling. If the child fails at this stage, she or he may be affected in her or his whole schooling (Joshua, 2006:10 in Mahlo, 2011). The researcher is of the opinion that the selected participants would provide significant information regarding the topic under investigation because they are directly involved with learner support.

In the quest to gather authentic data for the research, the researcher chose the population from the group of subjects from which the data was collected, often representative of a specific population (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:6). The choice of participants was informed by the need to obtain the perspective regarding learner support and experiences encountered by teachers as they implement learning instructions learning in diverse classrooms.

### **3.6. DATA COLLECTING STRATEGIES**

In this study, the researcher used interviews, observations and document analysis to collect data that answered research questions of this study. The data collection steps include setting the boundaries for the study, collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, analysis materials, as well as establishing the protocol for recording information (Creswell, 2014:239). The use of interviews was the basis of the experiences of teachers who teach learners in a diverse Foundation Phase classroom. The interviews assisted in helping assess and evaluate how teachers assisted learners with learning difficulties. Interviews consisted of structured questions that provided a predetermined set of responses from which the participants choose (Schumacher and Macmillan, 2014:7). Classroom observations and document analysis enabled the researcher to perceive a lot into the study from the participants that were involved in it, and obtained a deep understanding of the phenomena and the participants behaviour, which allows collection of a more complete

set of data that reflected the importance of the effect of the context that was learner support (Schumacher and Macmillan, 2014:376).

### **3.6.1. INTERVIEWS**

The researcher used the interview schedule as data collection tool. This tool was developed to align with the research title: *Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District*. The interview process took 20 minutes to half an hour. The questions were open-ended and semi-structured. These interview questions were used to understand the situation in each classroom. These open-ended interview questions were also used to elicit information from the teachers regarding how they render learner support. Semi-structured questions were useful tools to get vital information from Foundation Phase teachers. The in-depth and semi-structured interviews were then used to clarify and understand the issues arising from the interview and classroom observations.

According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:6), semi-structured questions are fairly interview questions that allow for individual, open-ended responses.

The questions asked in the interview had a direct bearing on the objectives of the study namely:

- i. *to explore teachers' experiences in supporting learners;*
- ii. *to determine how teachers provide learning support; and*
- iii. *to determine strategies that can be used to enhance learner support in the Foundation Phase.*

The interview was structured to answer the first sub research: 'what are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms?' As noted earlier, interviews were conducted in this study in order to understand the participants' experiences and the meaning they make of those experiences through their descriptions and their reflection on the descriptions (Cohen et al., 2010:122). The interview sessions were used to analyse inductively the experiences of teachers in learning support process. Three teachers in Foundation Phase and the Foundation HOD were interviewed.

These interview questions were used to understand the situation in each classroom pertaining to learner support. These open-ended interview questions were also used to ascertain the extent to which the teacher's inclusive education perception in each classroom influenced their current practices regarding implementation of learner support. The researcher had to understand the type of learners that the Foundation Phase teachers have, and get an understanding of how they cope with them, so the first entry question was asked, followed by others. "In qualitative research, the pilot study is usually informal and the few respondents possessing the same characteristics as those of the main investigation can be involved in the study, merely to ascertain certain trends" (Mahlo 2011:104).

The interview questions were used to understand the situation in each classroom pertaining to learner support. (see appendix F, interview schedule) These open-ended interview questions were used to ascertain the extent to which the teachers' inclusive education perception in the classroom can influence their current practices. The researcher wanted to understand their challenges when teaching these learners.

The interviews were recorded with the permission of the teachers and the recorded clips were saved, with back-ups kept on a memory stick. In this study, the classroom was the field and field-notes were taken in order to maintain a level of accuracy (Schumacher and McMillan, 2014). The interview process was flexible regarding the sequence of the topics that were addressed (Schumacher and McMillan, 2014).

These interview questions were structured to elicit the biographical profile of the participants. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with the use of semi-structured questions, because they gave participants an opportunity to elaborate on responses and there is also room to clarify on some responses that may seem ambiguous. The questions in the interview have a direct "bearing on the objectives" of this study. The researcher also used the interviews because there was no need for the participants to be able to read or write, and if there were any misconception in the questions they were clarified (Neumann, 2015).



Newby (2017) states that the flexibility of interviews and their ability to expose issues creates an understanding of processes, events, and emotions. The other strength of interviews is that they cater for or create room for assessment and understanding of verbal human behaviour that elucidates more of a response. The researcher conducted the interviews in the Foundation Phase classroom after school. When learners had left for their homes, the interviews were twenty minutes. The responses were recorded on a tape recorder as well as on the exercise book /pad. It should be noted that before the interview commenced, the researcher sought consent from the teachers.

The interview sessions were used to inductively analyse the experiences of teachers in learning support process. Document analysis were also used to clarify and understand the issues emanating from teachers' experiences in learner support. The interviews were conducted with the aim of exploring Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in rendering learner support to learners with learning difficulties so that the results of the research could guide and influence the planning and implementation of the learner support in the Foundation Phase. The interview responses were arranged into contexts or ideas that are discussed in the qualitative results segment of this study. The experiences given by the teachers about learner support were analysed qualitatively. A classroom observation schedule was used to augment the qualitative data gathered from interviews and is described in the next section (interview question(s) for teachers attached as Appendix G).

### **3.6.2. LESSON OBSERVATION**

The researcher adapted the classroom observation schedule from DBE (2017) to collect the data. This schedule was initially checked and studied to see if it could pick up the required form of data. The researcher also observed teachers teaching English reading lessons, in order to fully analyse the lessons. The Reading Lesson Observation Framework (RLOF) (see Appendix H) was used in conjunction with the observation schedule.

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:376) define observations as a way for the researcher to see and hear what is occurring naturally in the research site. Creswell (2014:239) concurs

that qualitative observation takes place when the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. The events were observed and recorded by the researcher through taking field notes on the behaviour and activities of teachers in their classrooms. In these field notes, the researcher records, in an unstructured or semi-structured way, activities at the research site. Qualitative observers may also engage in roles varying from a nonparticipant to a complete participant (Creswell, 2014:239). A non-participant observer observes without participating. In this study, the researcher was a complete observer (Creswell, 2014:241). Lesson observation was done in a natural setting of the classroom that provided detailed and context related information that had a direct bearing on methods by which teachers taught their learners. This created a more positive room for reliability, ensuring the cooperation of teachers who participated in the research study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:92). Resilient classrooms are places where all learners can be successful emotionally, academically and socially (Doll et al. in Landsberg, 2016:551).

In conducting classroom observations, the researcher needed to know how the teachers in the Foundation Phase take steps to make their classroom resilient, thus making all learners successful during learner support. The researcher needed to observe if the teachers' teaching styles, approaches, methods, and rapport with the learners was addressing the diversity of learner who needed support. It was also important to comprehend how receptive the learners were, and what was going on during the researcher's observation in the classrooms. Such comprehension is important to the refinement and development of principles for the design of an effective learning environment, informed by the data collected in the process.

The focus on the observation strategies used by teachers in the Foundation Phase classrooms was on how they teach, and how they interact with the learners. The study also aimed to determine how teachers maintain the good performance of the learners during learner support. The main factors in learner support strategies were classroom management and instructions. The observation strategy was aligned in a way that validated information that was recorded during interviews. Observation strategies were

based on the classroom management and instructions. They are outlined briefly in Table 3.1 below.

**Classroom management and instructions (adapted from Landsberg 2016: 552-554)**

Table 3.1

Classroom management	Instruction
Planning	Developing a well-managed classroom
Classroom rules	Managing acceptable learner behaviour in the classroom
Procedures or classroom routines	Engaging the learners in learning by following responsibilities implied by rules
Teacher and Learner relationship	Managing learning material, lessons, and communication

The classroom management domain sought to enable the researcher to observe how the teachers in the classroom creates, manages and organises their classes and also how they engage and assess the learners during classroom instructions and learner support.

According to Creswell (2013:47), observational research may be conducted for various reasons: it is very often part of a general interest in understanding, for one reason or another, what people do, and the reason why they do it. So, during classroom observations, the researcher was able to understand what teachers do in terms of support and why they do it. Furthermore, Makgakga (2016:120) states that observation in research displays several features, such as the collection of evidence, the analysis or examination of evidence, and the formation of significant judgement, based on the evidence and the subsequent implications, such as changes in and the improvement of practices. Hence, in this study, the researcher observed the availability and use of teaching resources, as well as the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the Foundation

Phase teachers during their interaction with learners with learning difficulties and diverse learning needs.

Schumacher and McMillan (2014:378) ascertain that “field observation is an active process that includes non-verbal cues, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and body movements and other unverballed social interactions that suggest the subtle meaning of language”. In other words, the implication of this statement in this study is that the researcher observed the teachers implementing learner support, through perceptions of events and processes expressed in their feelings thoughts and beliefs as they interact with learners (Schumacher and McMillan, 2014:378).

The researcher intended to observe the following items during classroom observations with the Foundation Phase teachers:

- i. The availability of teaching resources, including educational toys and books that were specifically designed to provide learning for learners with learning difficulties and diverse learning needs. Examples of teaching resources could include puzzles of different difficulty levels and books that contain many pictures and diagrammes to stimulate visual learners, who learn by seeing concrete examples of concepts, for example, if the teacher says “ball” the learner must be shown the picture of a ball.
- ii. The way teaching resources were used to provide learning support to struggling learners.
- iii. The verbal interaction between Foundation Phase teachers and Foundation Phase learners during lessons.
- iv. The non-verbal interaction between Foundation Phase teachers and Foundation Phase learners, to find if Foundation Phase teachers are comfortable and confident in the way they interact with learners with learning difficulties and diverse learning needs, for example in the way they used non-verbal communications to involve withdrawn learners who do not feel comfortable to participate in group or pair work during lessons.

The researcher used the classroom observation schedule adapted from DBE (2017) as mentioned earlier, and used these observation schedules to answer the second sub-research question: how do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support? During the observation, the researcher used a specially designed observation template attached as Appendix H to write short, anecdotal notes as field notes during the observations. The observation template was necessary to record information as it occurred. Each Foundation Phase teacher was observed for 20 minutes to half an hour and follow-up observations were arranged because more data was required. The observations were conducted two times in the first stage of data collection, and two times in the final stage.

The main factors that contributed to this time frame was: firstly, the researcher did not want to intrude too much in the classroom activities; secondly, she did not want to influence the objectivity of the study by forming social relations with participants over a long period of time; and thirdly, there was no need to prolong the time in the field once sufficient data was collected to meet the objectives of the study because the role of the researcher/observer is to act as a complete observer and to stay detached from the group or process, and thus becomes a complete observer (McMillan and Schmacher, 2014; Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative research data collection methods such as participant-observation method, unstructured interviews, direct observation, and describing records are mostly commonly used for collecting data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). During data collection phase, the researcher interacted with the participants directly, such as happens with data collection through interviews. Consequently, data collection is subjective and detailed (Denzin, 2016:105). Typically, the reflex records are the researcher's critical self-monitoring for potential biases the researcher reports biographical sources of subjectivity.

In conducting classroom observations, the researcher needed to know how the teachers in the Foundation Phase use approaches and methods of teaching to address learners' learning styles. It was also vital to comprehend how receptive the learners were and what transpired in the classrooms during the researcher's classroom observations. Such comprehension is important to the development of principles for the design of significant learning support strategies. The strategies used by teachers during learner support; how

they interacted with the learners; feedback to the learners during teaching and learning; and how learners were assessed or observed are instrumental to the development of learner support strategies. In a nutshell, the researcher observed how learning, teaching, and support materials complemented one another. In conclusion, observation captured natural behaviours and “mitigates social desirability, response” sets, and subjects’ effects”. It was also “relatively unobtrusive”, and proved “reliable for low” interference observation. McMillan and Schmacher (2014:228), however they warn researchers not to lose sight of the fact that observation as a method of collecting data can also have adverse effects of cost, time, the effect of observation on subjects, observer bias, ability to probe and clarify, anonymity, and can cause high interference in interpretation (see observation schedule attached as Appendix G).

### **3.6. 3.DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

Document analysis incorporated coding content into themes, similar to how observations and interview transcripts were analysed (Mtunjani, 2014). Mtunjani (2014) goes on to state that, teachers’ lesson plan and records can be scrutinised. In this study, the researcher analysed three Foundation Phase teachers’ learning support plans. There were three lesson plans from one Grade One, one Grade Two and one lesson plan from Grades Three. The researcher used the SIAS, CAPS, and the WP6 documents to determine what should be taught in the Foundation Phase in terms of learner support. The researcher also looked at what was included or missing in the teachers’ learning support documents, such as remedial books, observation and special needs assessment. Furthermore, the researcher compared the Foundation Phase support documents to the resources in the SIAS document, in order to identify similarities and differences.

The researcher used various sources (texts and document, visual sources and artefacts and oral traditions), which provided a wealth of useful information (Le Roux, 2014:23). Valuable information was drawn from learner support document sources and these were highly significant in qualitative research. The researcher scrutinised the learning support lesson plans to ascertain whether teachers are implementing support according to the

Policy of Screening Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), CAPS and White Paper 6, 2001. Analysis needs to occur on at least two levels, viz. visible and invisible level (Le Roux, 2014:23). The implication for this study is that the visible analysis was to be seen through what the learning documents presented, and the invisible analysis would be the factors that teachers would use to recognise diversity in the learners and their learning styles.

The analysis was not confined to the construction or composition of the source, but included the context of the artefact or image and requirements about the purpose, role, and use in the community or society in and for which it was constructed (Le Roux, 2014:31). The analysis by the researcher in this study was not restricted to learner support documents only, but it was also extended to determine whether the roll and seating arrangements and environments in the classrooms whose documents were analysed were inclusion sensitive. The White Paper 6 and SIAS explain how support should be given to children at the early stage with special reference to the SIAS. Needs analysis is vital to rendering meaningful support, which, according to White Paper 6 (2001), the whole essence of learner support is Inclusion. Furthermore, it categorically means that in a Foundation Phase classroom that reflects the diversity of students, learner support should be constant with “their backgrounds: social organisation; cultural values; learning preferences, and sociolinguistics” (Ronald Tharp 1989 in Woolfolk, 2014 :196).

White Paper 6 was constructed to ballast inclusive education, unequivocally stating that “these documents describe functions and values on how various authorities define the organisation” (Landsberg et al., 2016:19). The researcher had the intention of exploring how teachers utilise documents such as the White Paper 6, CAPS and SIAS, so as to define the functions and values of Foundation Phase learner support in diverse classrooms.

### **3.7.DATA ANALYSIS**

The researcher compared data to establish trends and patterns that are used when rendering learner support and those were written down. One characteristic that distinguishes qualitative research is that analysis is done during and after collection of data. Analysis of data is an ongoing part of the study (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2014:395). Taking notes throughout data analysis process and writing all impressions and reflections is useful in making the researcher familiar with the data (Conway, 2017). The procedure began with naming and categorising the text through close examination of data. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) contend that data analysis takes the form of written language in qualitative study. The researcher is required to read the transcribed data a number of times in order to become very familiar with the data and the context of the data (Conway, 2017). The analysis of the qualitative data can be done concurrently with the gathering of the data, making interpretations, and writing reports. The researcher applied the process of qualitative data analysis from specific to general, involving multiple levels of analysis, from the bottom to the top (Creswell, 2014:24). Creswell views this approach as being interactive, because it shows a linear and hierarchical approach, building the organisation of data. Practice is interrelated and not always visited in the order presented. In this research, the analysis of the qualitative data involved gathering open-ended data collected from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Data from interviews and classroom observations was generated from the responses given by the teachers to general and specific questions that was requested by the researcher. Document analysis emanated from scrutinising learner support documents. Qualitative data was analysed using the information supplied by Foundation Phase Teachers and one Foundation Phase HOD.

Data analysis was a qualitative, inductive process; the collected data was organised into categories, and the researcher identified patterns and relationships among the categories (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010: 367). This was done by starting with specific data and ending with categories and patterns (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010: 367). A combination of pre-determined and emerging codes was used, the coding of the data



followed Creswell's (2014:197) encouragement to qualitative researchers to analyse their data for material that can address the following:

- codes on topics that the readers would expect to find, grounded on previous or existing literature;
- unanticipated codes; and
- codes that cover a prominent theoretical perspective in the research.

The aim was to produce findings that could help to answer the research questions, hence the following sub-research questions:

- What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms?
- How do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support?
- What strategies can enhance learner support in the Foundation Phase?

Merriam (1988) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) are of the opinion that data collection and data analysis must be a process that happen at the same time in qualitative research. (Schatzman and Strauss 1973 in Creswell, 2014) contend that qualitative data analysis primarily entails classifying things, persons, and events and the properties which characterize them. Typically, throughout the data analysis process ethnographers index or code their data using as many categories as possible (Creswell, 2014). During data analysis the data will be organized categorically and chronologically, reviewed repeatedly, and continually coded (Creswell, 2014 :258).

The indexing and coding done by the researcher in this study is explained as following:

- Coding data  
The researcher used a number system identical to the order of the research sub-questions to sort the data into themes:
  - Theme 1: Accommodating diverse learning needs

- Theme 2: Partnership between parents and teachers as central to learner support
- Theme 3: Systemic challenges
- Theme 4: Learner support in the classroom

The alternative explanations or data was meant to be a credible way of writing evidence. According to Delport and Fouché (2010: 426), writing credibility to the study include qualitative evidence in the report. The evidence include recordings of Foundation Phase teachers and a Foundation Phase HOD, as participants; quotations from policy documents that are relevant to Foundation Phase teacher preparation for learner support; the questions that were asked of participants, and their responses, in tabular format; appendices, i.e. the letters of communication stakeholders, the consent forms completed by stakeholders, the interview guide, the interview schedule, the interview data, the observation template, and the observation schedule.

The data collected in this study was digitally recorded and the consent for those recordings was provided for the participant. The information collected was not divulged. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Data was protected and treated in a confidential manner at all times. Future use of the data would be subject to further ethics research review and approval where applicable.

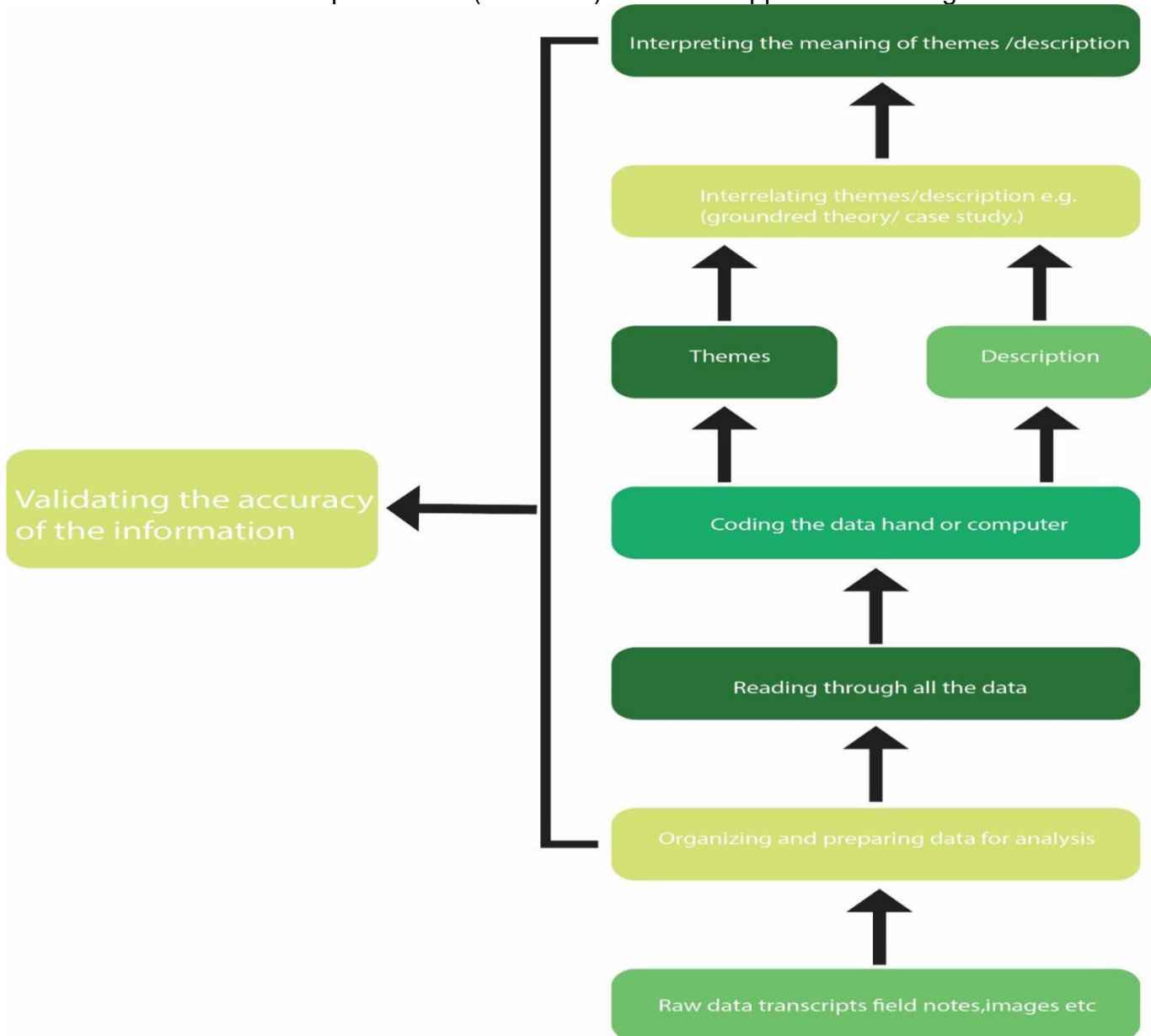
### **3.7.1. ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA**

One characteristics of qualitative data collection is “that analysis is done during data collection as well as after all the data has been” gathered (McMillan and Schumacher 2014:394). Leedy and Ormrod (2010:96) concur that qualitative researcher’s make considerable use of inductive reasoning, and make many specific observations and then draw inferences about larger and more general phenomena. In this study, the researcher scrutinised the data in a relatively systematic process of coding, categorising, and interpreting data to provide explanation of teachers ‘experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District. According to Creswell (2014), the analysis of the qualitative data can be done concurrently with the gathering of the data, making

interpretations and writing reports. This study followed Creswell's steps in analysing the qualitative data from specific to general, involving multiple levels of analysis. Figure 3.1 below illustrates the process of analysis in qualitative research.

Fig:3.1

The figure shows a linear, hierarchical approach, building the organisation of data from the bottom to the top. Creswell (2014:247) views this approach as being interactive in



Data analysis in qualitative research: the figure was adapted from (Creswell 2014:247)

practice, interrelated, and not always visited in the order presented. In this research, the analysis of the qualitative data involved gathering open-ended data collected from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Data from interviews and classroom observations “were generated from the responses given by the teachers” to general and specific questions that were asked by the researcher. Document analysis included Foundation Phase teachers’ intervention programmes; observation books, assessment tools, timetables, and remedial/support books of learners with learning difficulties.

Qualitative data was analysed by using the information supplied by four Foundation Phase Teachers. The data collected in this study was digitally recorded and the consent for those recordings was also provided for the participant. The information collected was not divulged. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

### **3.8. TRUSTWORTHY**

“Trustworthy assessment involves reliability, which is an umbrella term for dependability over time, over instruments, and over groups of respondents.” “Reliability is concerned with precision and accuracy” (Cohen et al., 2018:268).

MacMillan and Schumacher (2014:195) state that “reliability refers to the consistency of measurements in which the results are similar over the same instruments or occasion of data collection”. In order to establish validity and reliability on the research findings the researcher’s attention was on three primary forms typically used by qualitative researchers: triangulation, member checking, and auditing of a study. *Triangulation* is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, methods of data collection, in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. *Member checking* is a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study check the accuracy of the account of the project. “*External audit* refers to the process of hiring and use of multiple validity strategies”. (Creswell, 2012; 2014). The same questions and observation checklists ensured elimination of errors and guarantee for consistency. The same procedure of data collection mentioned was reliable. Trustworthiness refers to how

worthy a system might be trusted to satisfy whatever critical elements are desired (Neuman, 2017).

### **3.8.1. PRINCIPLES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Mahlo (2011:97) indicates that, “trustworthiness is a method of ensuring rigour in qualitative research without compromising relevancy”. The following is the discussion of the five principles of trustworthiness and their importance in the study.

### **3.9. CREDIBILITY**

“Credibility determines accuracy and trustworthiness of the facts”. In this particular study, “credibility was based on an evaluation of each of the major section of the reports.” (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2014). Validity refers to “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” and is subjective. In the case of this study, truth came from the explanation given by participants regarding learner support (Maxwell, 2013: 122).

Trustworthiness is also determined by doing member checks and minimizing distances. The researcher employed validity check measures in order to root out bias neglect and lack of precision. Stephanie (2017) states that validity and reliability are often used interchangeably. A test is valid when it tests what it is supposed to measure, so for this study, the interview questions were valid because they elicited the information that they were supposed to get from the participants. The researcher made available evidence that supports the conclusion for example the response from interviews and observations.

### **3.10. TRANSFERABILITY**

According to (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:316), “the extent to which the findings can be applied to other settings and contexts is known as transferability”

### **3.11. DEPENDABILITY**

Neuman (2003:179) has suggested that reliability concerns dependability. The dependability of data in this study was established by capturing all the interviews and classroom observations on a tape and transcribing them both manually in writing and using computer software. Attempts were made in the process to reduce the interview

scripts as accurately as possible, so as to eliminate possible threats to the reliability of the instruments. In a different manner, data is analysed and interpreted by a process which involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making interpretations of the larger meaning of the data (Sepeng, 2010:75).

### **3.12. CONFORMABILITY**

According to Statistic Solution (2017), conformability is the last criterion of trustworthiness that a researcher must establish. This criterion has to do with the level of confidence that the research study's findings are based on the participants' narratives and words, rather than on potential researcher biases.

The concept of conformability refers to the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity (Shenton, 2004:72). Here, the researcher took steps to ensure as far as possible that the study's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the Foundation Phase teachers rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher herself. The role of triangulation in promoting such conformability must again be emphasised in this context so as to reduce the effect of investigator bias (Shenton, 2004:72).

### **3.13. AUTHENTICITY**

According to Cohen et al. (2018:247) authenticity refer to true description of people events and places. It refers to the ability of the researcher to report the situation through the eyes of the participant.

### **3.14. RESEARCH ETHICS**

According to Cohen et al. (2018:112), educational researchers have the responsibility to participants to act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings.

Researchers have to make sure that the privacy, the rights, and the welfare of their participants are guaranteed (McMillan and Schumacher 2014:364).

In this study, informed consent from the teachers was requested after prior permission to conduct this research. The researcher obtained the ethics clearance. After ethics clearance, the researcher approached the Department of Basic Education for permission to visit the schools. Subsequent to being granted permission and given a permission letter to submit to the school principals, the researcher approached the principals and the Foundation Phase teachers at the school. Permission from the GDE attached as Appendix B. The researcher requested the principal and the Foundation Phase teachers that were sampled to participate in the research. The roles of the participants, their rights to choose to be participants and to participate or not to in this study were explained to them. One way of protecting a participant's privacy is through promise of confidentiality; that is, not disclosing information from a participant in any way that might identify the individual or that might enable the individual to be traced (Cohen et al., 2011:340; 2018:130).

Most educational research deals with people. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) assert that it is ultimately the researcher's responsibility to avoid costs that may include injury and physiological difficulties, such as shame and loss of self-esteem and efforts to human dignity (McMillan and Schumacher 2014). McMillan and Schumacher (2014) and Creswell (2012) concur that "research ethics is focused on what is morally proper when engaging with the participants, or when accessing archival data". Names and credentials of participants will not be divulged and will be protected. They also state that the primary investigator is responsible for the ethical standards used in the research. In the context of this study, the primary investigation was for the researcher finding permission to conduct research from GDE. Research permission, consent and ascent letters were issued to participants. (see appendices D and F, respectively). The research was conducted during the times that were stipulated by the GDE and the principal.

Participants were assured of confidentiality, and it was indicated to them that participation was voluntary, and they were given permission to withdraw from the study at any stage without any punitive measures, while being assured that no personal details would be

divulged. The confidentiality of the information collected at the school was also ensured, and it was indicated that no part of the data collected from interviews and observations done at schools and in the classrooms will be used in any other situation other than this research. The consent form was then signed by the researcher and the teachers participating in this research. Participants were given assurance that the audiotapes of every that transpired in the interviews will be kept under safe and lock until all transcriptions are completed and later everything will be destroyed.

### **3.15. CONCLUSION**

Strategies of gathering the data and the detailed research process used in this study are informed by Creswell (2009:191; 2014:197), McMillan and Schumacher (2014), Cohen et al. (2018), and DeVos et al. (2017). Analysis of qualitative data, issues concerning validity and reliability, population, sampling as well as the ethical issues that kept the research process were also described, discussed, and explained. This chapter has given a description of the research design and methodology. Chapter 4 will be a representation and deliberate analysis of data collected through instruments that were highlighted in Chapter 3.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter three discussed ways used to collect data in this study which had followed qualitative approach. The chapter also discussed ethical issues such as applying for ethical clearance certificate, as well as how not to violate the rights and human dignity of participants. Chapter 3 also discussed how data is analysed in this study.

This chapter reports on the qualitative analysis. Data was generated from the four teachers, after the interviews and three teachers after the classroom observation were conducted. Data from document analysis was also used. According to Creswell (2014:258), during data analysis, the data will be organised categorically and chronologically, reviewed repeatedly, and continually coded.

Fig 4.1 below is an illustration of the inductive data analysis process adapted from McMillan and Schumacher (2014:396).

Fig 4.1

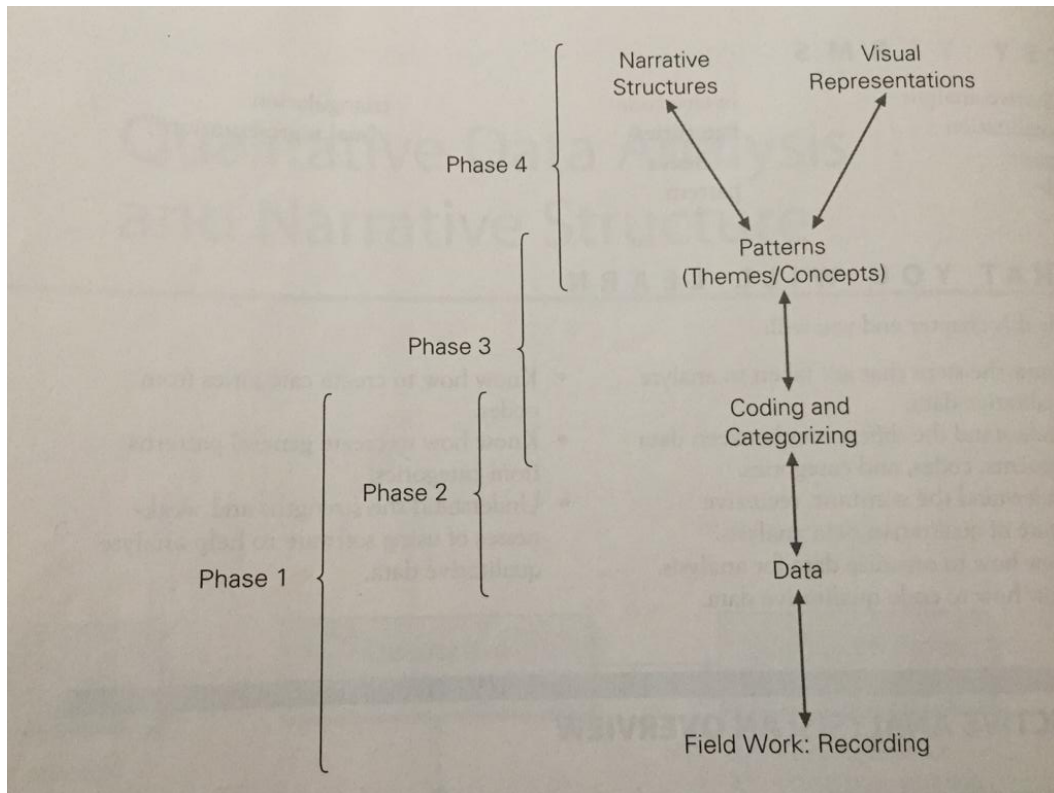


Fig 4.1

### Process of Inductive Data Analysis

Using interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis was important to collect information and gain an in-depth understanding and insight into the main research question: what are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District?

### Semi-structured interviews

The researcher commenced by reading through semi-structured interview data transcribed from the audios recorded from the interviews. Data was coded, categorised and organised into manageable units. As discussed in Chapter 3, the research was undertaken through semi-structured qualitative individual interviews with three Foundation Phase teachers and the HOD. The follow-up interviews were conducted to get clarity from participants. The interviews were conducted in a relaxed and

conversational manner, allowing participants to contribute factual information, as well as exploring their emotional responses and feelings.

This chapter is divided into four sub-sections: the analysis of the interviews with the teachers where the interviews are described from initial stage; the classroom observations during teaching periods; the document analysis; and the conclusion of the chapter.

As noted earlier, this study is designed to answer the following research questions (RQ):

RQ.1. What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District?

RQ.2. What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms?

RQ.3. How do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support?

RQ.4. What strategies can enhance learner support in Foundation Phase?

The data-analysis in this chapter followed the themes and sub-themes which the researcher generated from the interviews, the classroom observations and document analysis. Prior to presenting and interpreting the data, the researcher provided a brief background information of each participants. The profiles of the participants were determined by the information provided on the interview guide and during the interviews.

## **4.2. PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS**

Four teachers participated in this study. Identity of participants were protected by use of codes such as PA, PB, PC and PD. The consent form was then signed by both the researcher and the participants. Table 4.1. provides information about participants in this study.

Table 4.1

Participant	Age	Gender	Qualification	Teaching experience	Number of learners in class	Grade	Inclusive education training
A	58	female	Remedial Certificate in Junior Prim	35	50	3	NONE
B	55	female	Diploma in Junior Prim	12	57	1	NONE
C	56	female	Diploma in Junior Prim	28	58	2	NONE
D	45	female	Diploma in Junior Prim	17	HOD	R,1,2and3	NONE

Participant A was a 58-year-old female teacher, who had 35 years' teaching experience teaching 50 learners in the Foundation Phase, using English as a medium of instruction, and had been trained as a remedial teacher for learners experiencing difficulties in learning.

Participant B was a 55-year-old female teacher with seven years of practicing Foundation Phase learner support. She holds a Diploma in Junior Primary education.

Participant C was a 55-year-old female teacher who has been teaching for 28 years, teaching 58 learners in Grade 2 and with 28 years, has a teaching Diploma in Junior Primary education.

Participant D was the Foundation Phase HOD who has a Junior Primary Diploma and 17 years of teaching experience, and as for the other three teachers interviewed from her phase, did not have a qualification in Foundation Phase inclusive education. She mentioned insufficient training of teachers and a lack of assistive devices as challenges in implementing learner support.

### 4.3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data from the four participants was around the topic: “Foundation Phase Teachers’ Experiences in Implementing Learner Support in Johannesburg North District” The finding revealed four major themes that are discussed below as follows:

- accommodating diverse learning needs;
- partnership between parents and teachers as central to learner support;
- systemic challenges; and
- learner support in the classroom.

Table 4.2 is indicative of the four major themes and sub-themes that were discussed.

Table 4.2

<b>Theme 1. Accommodating diverse learning needs</b>
1. Learning and learner support Environment 2. Teaching and learning strategies
<b>Theme 2. Partnership between parents and teachers as central to learner support</b>
1. Parental support
<b>Theme 3. Systemic challenges</b>
1. Overcrowding in classroom 2. Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) 3. Insufficient training of teachers
<b>Theme 4. Learner support in the classroom</b>
1. Socio-economic background of the learner 2. Lack of SBST/DBST support 3. Lack of assistive devices

### 4.4. ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS

Needs analysis results from diverse learning, where, in such case that different learning needs are accommodated, teachers are paying attention to learners' learning specifications. Thus, inclusion becomes a mirror through which learner support is viewed in an ordinary school.

#### 4.4.1. LEARNING AND LEARNER SUPPORT ENVIRONMENT

A few extracts of teachers' interviews used as examples are presented below and the participating teachers were coded as follows: (Teacher A): PA; (Teacher B): PB; (Teacher C): PC; (HOD): PD.

Transcript 1: What are your experiences in supporting learners in a diverse classroom? The first interview question probed teachers' perceptions about the challenges faced when teaching English in a diverse classroom and the possible reasons that may have caused the perceived challenges. This question was designed to draw data about different learning styles.

Extract 4.1 below illustrates Teacher A's responses to the interview question of Transcript 1

Extract 4.1

PA	<i>In the first place, we have to start with the curriculum, the curriculum is too vast. You cannot get back to basics. You cannot do your support the way you should do. In the second place, the remedial classes were taken away, you are working with some children, not all. There are a few really that is earmarked for the remedial classes.</i>
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The extract above depicts that teachers are faced with curriculum that is too demanding. This shows that teachers struggle to provide learners with necessary support in diverse classrooms due to the workload imposed by the curriculum.

In other words, learner support is effective when the teachers have enough support from the Department of Basic Education in terms of a flexible curriculum that will do justice to the diverse needs of the learners. The teacher suggests that there is no diversity, because the curriculum does not address this diversity. The DBE must give the teachers leeway to decide what goes on in the classroom. PA goes on to indicate her concern about the removal of remedial classes, which according to her, curtails both learning and support. The DBE does not make provision for diversity of learners. The learners who are struggling write the same annual assessment paper as do those who are not struggling.

When asked what her experiences are in supporting learners in a diverse classroom, Teacher B gave the following response.

Extract 4:2

PB	<i>What is the meaning of this diverse? It is sometimes strenuous because most of the children are having learning problems.</i>
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PB appears not to understand what diversity is, implying that she may not fully understand the concept of diversity, revealing that they might not have received support from the DBE. The diversity referred to encompasses both the differences in learners' learning styles, and the sitting arrangement in the classroom. It means that teachers were not empowered prior to the implementation of learner support in diverse classrooms. PB highlighted that she was not even aware of the meaning of learner diversity. If the teacher is not aware of the diversity, then there is no way in which the learners' problems that are brought about because of their difference is able to receive focus.

Extract 4:3 below is Teacher C's response on her experiences in supporting learners in a diverse classroom.

Extract 4:3 Teacher C

PC	<i>My experience is that it is very difficult to support, because the diversity is so vast, and I have not been trained in how to handle the diversity. I found that the language barriers, I speak within my class, I have four different languages at the moment, so it is very difficult to do it.</i>
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Teacher C above indicates that most challenging factor when it comes to learner support in her class is linguistic complexity. PC perceives this diversity as overwhelming. She thinks that teachers don't know how to support learners because they do not have training in inclusive education, where this may affect how they render learner support.

During the interviews, all the participants revealed challenges with diverse learners in the classrooms. Teachers feel pressurised, and this compromises the quality of learning in diverse classrooms. According to SIAS (2014:13) policy document, one of the challenges referred to as barrier to learning and development is the implementation of an inflexible curriculum at schools. Participants draw out the fact that they are overwhelmed by the unrealistic demands of the curriculum.

PA focuses on different learning style, as she is referring to "*a few really that are earmarked for the remedial classes*", and this consideration has a direct bearing on the theme of accommodating diversity.

South African teachers are confronted with a wide diversity of learners, due to socio-economic differences, inequality and poverty, unemployment of parents, different religious backgrounds, social differences, ethnic and cultural differences, racial tensions, sexual orientation, gender violence and insensitivity, unequal provisioning of resources, including health services, as well as the many different languages learners speak. They come to school with different experiences, levels of education, and care (DBE: Responding to diversity, 2017:6).



According to the DBE (2011), as teachers, we have an important responsibility in making sure that all learners from whatever background feel included and affirmed in the classroom. We should monitor our own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours when responding to our learners. However, data collected in this study has revealed that Foundation Phase when they are not yet ready to deal with the diverse learning needs. An interaction with the three teachers and the HOD revealed that some teachers without knowledge of diversity and learner support were allocated to teach in Foundation Phase.

#### 4.5. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

The participants had this to say concerning their teaching and learning strategies:

Extract 4:4

PA:	<i>Different strategies I think the children that are in need of; support needs to work more practically, which takes longer, you have to put in different strategies; even with phonic sound cards, they need to learn how to build words and they need to learn how to write sentences if you sit with them.</i>
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PA suggested that learners with special needs be separated according to their diverse learning needs, which according to the researcher defeats the whole purpose of learner support in an inclusive environment (White paper 2001). On the other hand, PA's willingness to engage learners during teaching and learning is evident of her desire to use different strategies even with phonic sound cards to help learners learn how to build words and how to write sentences. The teacher's comment was meant to allow the learners to think for themselves and interact with each other.

The following was PB's response when asked about teaching strategies she employ in her classroom.

Extract 4.5:

PB:	<i>The learning area will direct me if we are doing reading or listening and speaking, those children will have to draw or write.</i>
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Teacher B's response about the strategies she engages when teaching learners was not clear; she indicated that she gets a clue from the lesson itself. It is questionable as to how a teacher can simply state that direction to teach comes from the learning area itself.

The Extract 4.6 was Teacher C's response regarding how and what strategies she uses to teach in her classroom.

Extract 4.6:

PC-	<i>I plan according to my own personal strategies, in terms of phonics, I use concrete shapes that show the pictures single sounds. I give them easier activities; I am a Grade 2 teacher, so I go basically right back to the foundation just to make the concept easier.</i>
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PC took some initiative with learners who are struggling by identifying them and using concrete shapes that show picture and sounds. Extract 4.6 indicates PC's response to teaching strategies, which is indicative of commitment and intent to engage learners during learning and teaching. PC plans her lessons according to own strategies, this indicates that some teachers do not follow learner support strategies that are highlighted in the policy.

Extract 4.7:

PD	<i>-All learners are not the same, they are different, they are treated as individuals so that is diversity. -so those children we don't put them aside we include them in our day to day teaching but having some</i>
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	<i>strategies to address their challenges as a whole in that one lesson that I am preparing for my children.</i>
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Extract 4.7 indicates the response from PD, who happens to be the HOD of the Foundation Phase department at the school, and she had this to say has concerning learner diversity: “they are treated as individuals” the HOD is referring to the difference in learners diverse learning styles. The head of the foundation went on to say that: “we include them”, referring to learners who need support, the word “include” is consistent with diversity, and this shows that teachers are supporting learners in order for them to do well.

Teachers A, C, and D appeared to know that learners that are struggling, and that they need to be exposed to “different strategies” so that they can learn the concepts that are taught. The teachers decided to engage all learners by giving them reading and writing work during teaching and learning. On the contrary, Teacher PB is not quite sure about what strategies to use when teaching learners in her classroom, pointing out that, “*the learning area will direct*” her, implying that she has a vague idea of how to strategies teaching methods.

PA indicated the use of different learning styles that were referred to by PD as strategies, when Teacher C said that she gives learners easier activities, this implies that she is considering the learners’ level of comprehension.

#### **4.6. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS AS CENTRAL TO LEARNER SUPPORT**

Participants raised concern that a lack of parental involvement is detrimental to successful learner support, and that should be given to learners in the diverse Foundation Phase classrooms. Teachers tend to exhibit frustration if no support is forthcoming. The

participants' responses revealed that parents are either ignorant about the work given from school, or overwhelmed by poverty.

#### 4.6.1. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The partnership between parents and teachers reinforces the school-family and school-community relationships. The better the cooperation between the parents and the school, the more motivated the learners will be.

According to the bio-ecological theory, learner support is holistic, taking into account the systems and relationships that influence learners. It follows that learning will be compromised if a learner is neglected. The implication of referring to this model is that learners need to be supported in order to ensure that maximum learning is taking place. Teachers are aware that the microsystem of the school is mirrored in wider society, and that learning of social skills, tolerance, and inclusion entail bringing parents on board. The researcher asked PA the following question: *what challenges do you face?* The question concerned parental involvement in their children's education.

In supporting the importance of parental support, here is what the participants said during the interview:

Extract 4.8:

PA	<p><i>-The background of learner's social status. Parental involvement is next to nothing; good manners are taught at school, nothing is done at home.</i></p> <p><i>- You know what? I look at education as a triangle, the educator, the child and the parent, we have to work together to create a child that will be able to fulfil his position in life as a citizen of South Africa; but here it is basically the teacher and some of the children.</i></p>
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Extract 4.9:

PB	<p><i>-Most of the children who are not doing well sometimes it is caused by home: their performances sometimes its dragged by the home.</i></p> <p><i>- Some of the parent don't support, but most of them are supportive, they come to school some don't even agree if you can tell them, "hey, your child is doing this, is not behaving well like not doing the work". They will just say "ah, that child is doing very well at home."</i></p>
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Extract 4.9(i):

PD	<p><i>The learners who are [...] even the social economic background is affecting us there, were the parents don't care about whatever we are sending learners with to assist at home, because when you teach in the class you are window-dressing, and then you want to extend, so that learners can understand what you were teaching in form of homework, so the homework is where we reinforce; but then you find out that the home work is not done.</i></p>
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Teachers recognise the strength of parental involvement in the education of their children, Hence PA in Extract 4.8 noted with concern the lack of input from parents and highlighted the triangle nature of learner support. PB in Extract 4.9 noted that some parents acknowledge their children's school work, however other parents deny that their children need support even from home. Parents tend to exhibit denial about the fact that their

children cannot perform, and become defensive. While PC was rather silent about parental involvement in their children's schoolwork, PD in Extract 4.9(i) expressed that parents are not supportive with their children's homework, where learners would not value education, and this becomes another problem in implementing of learner support.

Emphasis is placed on bringing parents on board, in partnership with the school, in order to make the learning triangle mentioned by PA feasible.

The absence of the partnership between parents and the teachers is evident. The teachers and the school should try to emphasise the positive impact that parental involvement will bring to the education of their children.

#### **4.7. SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES**

When a system creates its own challenges, confusion and malfunctioning are created, goals won't be realised, and significant frustrations will become the order of the day. As noted earlier, systemic challenges present learning barriers created by the system itself. The education system runs in accordance with formulated policy, one such example is SIAS. Learner support, as mentioned in the SIAS 2014, is silent on the question of overcrowding of learners, medium of instruction and teachers who are not qualified to deal with diversity. The implication of this is that the size of classes, LoLT, with regards to admission of learners, as well as empowerment of teachers prior to introduction of SIAS, was not clearly defined by the DBE. This has led to overcrowding in schools, and to the allocation of teachers who are not trained to teach in Foundation Phase. The education system creates barriers by means of its own design. The following systemic challenges sub-themes that emerge from the patterns from data coding have been mentioned earlier as: overcrowding, LoLT, and insufficient training of teachers. The sub-themes are thus discussed as follows.

#### 4.7.1. OVERCROWDING IN THE CLASSROOM

A large number of schools in South Africa still have overcrowded classrooms and lack physical spaces for learner discussions, learning teaching and support material to enable learner support. These conditions prevent access to schools, create conditions that are not conducive to learning, and affect the effective implementation of inclusive education (Engelbrecht and Green, 2006:50).

The researcher at this point is concerned with a situation that causes stress to both teachers and learners, if teachers cannot cope because of big classes they suffer from stress and this will have a ripple effect: learners diverse learning needs would not be fulfilled and they will also suffer from stress.

Overcrowded classrooms result in teachers being overwhelmed thus they neglect learners who are struggling and need help. The teacher will only teach and complete the curriculum with only those who learn fast. “According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the South African Schools Act (SASA) it is a human right that learners attend a school near their home.” This had led to classes being full beyond capacity and made it hard to assist learners according to their diverse needs. When asked how they support learners in their classrooms Participants complained about the size of the classes and the following Extracts are indicative of overcrowding.

Extract 4.10:

PA	you cannot do support with classes so big. nowadays classes are too big in the first place.
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Extract 4:11:

PB	<i>it is my classroom that is overcrowded because if the children are overcrowded, it's not easy to reach what you call, to run with the curriculum. You sometime neglect them.</i>
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Extract 4:12:

P C:	<i>-the classes are just too big but at the moment the classroom size is hindering”.</i> <i>- our class size is too big we don't have time for individual attention”</i>
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Extract 4.13:

P D	<i>Our class sizes are very big so we don't have individual attention.</i>
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Teacher-learner ratio is a contributing factor to the ineffectiveness of support strategies. Class size is one of the major school factors that destroys the effective implementation of support strategies. John (2013) reports: “overcrowding obstructs traffic flow in the classroom”. According to Okebukoka (2012), The roles of the teacher cannot effectively take place in an overcrowded situation, because there is a limit to the number of learners a teacher that can manage effectively.

Houtonsonen (2008, 2011) sees over-crowding of classrooms in terms of overpopulation of learners in an academic environment called the classroom. This explains the presence of more learners in a classroom than the available resources, teacher, infrastructure and instructional materials. Campbell, (2010) concludes that overcrowding of classrooms in schools may lead to potential manpower wastages of school age. The data collected revealed need for educators to adapt their instructional ways to accommodate the size of the class, and they do not have time and space to thoroughly cover what the curriculum stipulates.

Extracts 4:12 and 4:13 show another challenge that was revealed by the teachers as overcrowding that prevents them from giving individual attention to learners. The



statement from Extract 4:11 implies that some learners are being neglected because teachers want to cover what the curriculum entails. The statements given by teachers are consistent with being overwhelmed, and frustration is inevitable. Therefore, teachers found it hard to support learners according to their diverse needs. This is an indicator for teaching methodologies to be adapted to suit learners requiring specialised support, to also to keep the size of the classes manageable, and for the DBE to start making realistic demands about learner support and curriculum coverage. All the respondents highlighted how it is very difficult to offer specialised support and do justice to curriculum coverage when there is such enormous overcrowding.

#### 4.7.2. LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING (LOLT)

During the interviews, different responses emerged which indicated that there were challenges as far as LoLT was concerned. Teachers revealed their frustration as follows:

Extract 4:15

P A:	<i>And again, you know what our home language, and school language of learning and teaching is English, the children are talking a slang, they are not talking fully English.</i>
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Extract 4:16

PC	<i>I found that the language barriers, I speak within my class, I have four different languages at the moment; so it is very difficult to do it.</i>
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Comments made in Extracts 4.15 and 4 shows that both PA and PC agree that medium of instruction is hindering learner support, according to PA, the children speak “slang they

*are not talking fully English”* This mean that learners do not even have a home language they can identify with. Home language refers to the language that is spoken most frequently at home by a learner (DBE, 2010). The learners in this study are frequently speaking slang at home thus the loss of home language identity. PC in Extract 4:16 strongly believes that her lack of knowledge of the vernacular languages that are spoken by learners is a barrier that makes learners not to fully attain, so in this case the teacher becomes a barrier in supporting the learners.

As indicated earlier in chapter one, the school where the study was conducted is situated in an Afrikaans-speaking area, which means that Afrikaans is their home language. When PA talks about English as an LoLT, she means to say that it is different from the home language of Afrikaans.

Language of learning and teaching of the school can be a barrier to learning The barrier can be two ways, from both the teacher and the learner. If the learner does not understand the medium of instruction and also if the teacher does not understand the language that the child speaks at home, it will be difficult for the teacher to assist the learner. In this case, learners may be wrongly diagnosed as struggling learners, whereas they will only be unaware of the meaning of the medium of instruction.

In concluding remarks on LoLT, it can be affirmed that the mother tongue is the primary means through which a child makes sense of her world and connects with others (Pandey 2014:63). The participants felt that using only a language not spoken at home by learners was detrimental in learning.

### **4.7.3. INSUFFICIENT TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

The school has a mandate to support all staff members, including Foundation Phase teachers, in shifting attitudes towards an inclusive culture that is an embodiment of learner support. The expertise of the subject teacher and the inclusive skills of learning support teacher are combined to teach a diverse group of learners in the same class (Landsberg et al. 2016:112).

A (DBST) make up a leadership that is committed to inclusion and support. They will ensure that staff are both developed and supported in developing learner support skills that will be beneficial to learners. Hence, the response from the participants indicated that some teachers were not trained as inclusive education teachers, and that this insufficient training of teachers elicited the following responses:

Extract 4.16(i):

P A	<i>When inclusion was introduced no education was introduced, no education of teachers took place; they presume that you can do remedial.</i>
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Extract 4.16(ii):

PC	<i>And I had not been trained in how to handle the diversity, some of the learning barriers are so complex, I can't identify them, because I don't have the qualification.</i>
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Extract 4.16(iii):

PD	<i>If we don't separate them, I think we need intensive training then as teachers... the way we are going to be trained and understand the learners their nature...</i>  <i>- I am not trained. but as a Foundation Phase teacher, you come across those things in everyday life.</i>
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The response in Extract 4.16(i) indicates that teachers need to be trained. It is clear from what PA said that the DBST did not train teachers on how to embrace inclusion and learner support in a diverse classroom. The DBST simply made the presumption that teachers would know how to undertake learner support. This is a plea for teachers to be empowered as far as inclusion and support of learners is concerned. Extract 4.16(ii) above indicates a lack of training. PC's comments reveal that teachers need training. It is clear that there is a call for training in aspects of learning support strategies and diversity. If the teacher who is supposed to implement learner support in a diverse classroom does not know "how to handle the diversity", then the teacher cannot manage diverse learners. Teachers are stressed and frustrated when they are supposed to differentiate the curriculum and address learner diversity, because they were never trained to do so. There is no training, no qualification, thus, there is a high need for training teachers. Empowering teachers on how to deal with struggling learners is the solution to the challenges teachers face when implementing learner. PD in Extract 4.16. (ii) points to the fact that teachers must be trained first before they implement learner support.

The response from the participants in learner support for Foundation Phase are of the opinion that other teachers in other higher phases will receive learner with a solid base in learning and development.

#### **4.8. LEARNER SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM**

The main focus of screening identification assessment and support, (SIAS) policy is to manage and support teaching and learning processes for learners who experience barriers to learning within the framework of the National Curriculum Statements Grades R-12 (SIAS, 2014:11). The curriculum demands and time constraints, are often a challenge. Teachers struggle to select content that proves meaningful and which is based on learners' needs and interests, as well as the learning environment. The absence of the latter sometimes compromises learner support. There are expectations and academic performance of the learner who needs support.

It was noted that where some learners are supported according to their diverse needs, they had managed to achieve academic success in this ordinary school. According to the HOD Participant D, the Foundation Phase department at this school aims to empower teachers through workshops and subject meeting.

Participant D had this to say in support about teacher empowerment:

Extract 4.16(iv):

PA	<i>I really don't, you know with some children, with the necessary support it helps them a lot. But then, you get children the kind of learner that work with their hands only, it would be better for some children to work practically on their own in their own classroom should have more diverse subject where do you find space and space give the teachers teaching assistance.</i>
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Extract 4:16(vii)

PC	<i>No, I have not. It's just, my experience carries me through, because I have been teaching for so many years, so my experience and the old method of</i>
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	<i>teaching learners helps me a bit; but I have no support in terms of learners with barriers.</i>
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Extract 4.16(viii):

PD	<i>Ja, we are giving them a professional committee, where we are developing our learners “teachers to understand” the difference of “our learners” in classes.</i>
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According to PD, diversity focuses on differences in learning style. The school expects all learners to learn. The researcher also noted that the HOD, as part of the school managers, is willing to acknowledge that learners and teachers in her Foundation Phase classes are well empowered, and have the expertise to determine what diversity is, as far as learner support is concerned.

Learner Socio-economic background, Lack of SBST/ DBST support and Lack of assistive devices came up as sub-themes under learner support in the classroom and are thus discussed below as follows:

#### **4.9. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE LEARNER**

Participants are of the opinion that poverty affected negatively most efforts for administering learner support.

The following are opinions that were highlighted:

Extract 4:17:

PA	<p><i>Remember also here in our area children are having children. They became parents, they don't finish their high school so, how can they help their children with homework? They are not even adults, they don't have any qualification, no qualification, you know what? Most children are staying with grannies.</i></p>
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Extract 4:18:

PB	<p><i>You look at the background of our learners: it's a low social economic status.</i></p> <p><i>I find that at home, the background itself is the one which lead them to that situation in the classroom; their performances sometimes its dragged by the home.</i></p>
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Extract 4:19

PD	<p><i>Even the social economic background is affecting us there, where the parents don't care about whatever we are sending learners with to assist at home - homework is where we reinforce, but then you find out that the homework is not done.</i></p>
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It is evident from the comments above that there is no reinforcement of concepts at home because of poverty, hunger, child neglect, lack of parental support, and lack of value for education. The problem is made worse by very young parents, who are school dropouts

and very old grannies, who are too old to take care of children (let alone assist them with homework). PA concurs that due to elders who do not have value for education, then children won't be motivated to learn. PB in Extract 4:18 said: *"their performances sometimes its dragged by the home"* The learner misses out on a lot of concepts because parents are busy trying to alleviate social problems that militate against progress at school. PD in Extract 4:19 stated that *"parents don't care"*. This is a reflection of lack of value for education. As a result of all these factors, learner support is destabilised.

Evidence from the discussion on socio-economic background shows that implementation of learner support will be compromised. The theoretical framework that underpins this study is Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory. The assumption that the environment influences the child's performances at home and school stems from the micro-systems that according to this study, the child develops and learns. She (the child) is moulded by those individuals and events nearest to her, and therefore, it is imperative that the home as the "micro-system", provides the necessary learning foundations.

The interview revealed that the home background of the learners is not modelling and providing the necessary support. Foundation Phase teachers are frustrated because parents as the primary caregivers are not on board.

#### **4.10. LACK OF SCHOOL AND DISTRICT BASED SUPPORT TEAM.**

As mentioned earlier, bio-ecological systems theory focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment, which is magnified by levels that play a crucial role in learner support in particular. The SBST/DSBT falls in the mesosystem; this layer provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem, and becomes the connection between the child and teacher. The interview on the functionality of SBST and DBST revealed challenges in this regard. Participants pointed out that the SBST and DBST exist on paper, and it was also evident during document analysis that no signatures from SBST were found in teachers and learners' books. The response to questions on the functionality of support structure at school proved that the help was not available.



PA was interviewed and shared the view that the curriculum was impacting negatively on teaching and learning. Other teachers did not explicitly claim that curriculum was bad, but I could sense it when they presented their support records. Their work presentation was not consistent with the curriculum. They fulfilled the most basic CAPS requirements, implying that the work was either too much or hard for them to implement.

After being asked the following question: ‘what do you have to say about curriculum differentiation?’ the interviewed teacher had this to say:

Extract 4.20:

PA	<i>Curriculum is too vast: you cannot get back to basics; you cannot do your support the way you should do. The curriculum becomes a challenge, because for me, it looks like there is more quantity than quality. Curriculum is a major thing, and they demand curriculum coverage: no support was given from the district; demands were made from district level, from district... from national to the district level. you need to support the teacher, you need support.</i>
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Extract 4.20(i):

PB	<i>Sometimes the SBST give you encouragement.</i>
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Extract 4.20(ii):

PC	<i>I receive absolutely no support and there is no viable means of getting in touch with them so we just go on at our own rate doing our own thing.</i>
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The comments are voicing frustration, where the expectations from CAPS appear to be too much for the teachers to handle. The curriculum becomes a “challenge” because they demand coverage, disregarding the learners’ needs for support. The response also indicated that children are being left out because teachers are under pressure and cannot cope, hence they report requiring teaching assistance.

The frustration of teachers due to pressure being exerted on them by the inflexible curriculum is also echoed by PB in what she says about learners in Extract 4:11. This is a very sad scenario, when teachers are tired, overwhelmed and stressed, and children become collateral damage, thereby defeating the purpose of learner support.

PC: see Extract 4.20(ii) and PA in Extract 4.20, which echoed the disappointment about lack of support from the DBST. It seems as though the DBST is not checking to see that school support does not become obsolete.

#### **4.11. LACK OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES AND RESOURCES**

Assistive devices are gadgets that are used or designed to assist a person to perform a particular task, such as visual, hearing, mobile, speech. Devices such as glasses to enhance sight; typewriters to enhance handwriting; hearing aids and crutches are also assistive devices. Wheelchairs and computer software can be utilised to assist learners do tasks according to their different impairments.

Teaching and learning resources comprise basically three components: material resources; physical facilities; and human resources. (Okongo et al., 2015:135).

HOD, reported having experienced difficulties with implementing learner support in a diverse Foundation Phase due to lack of material or infrastructural resources. After being asked this question: ‘do you have enough and necessary resources to implement inclusive education in your school?’ the participants gave the response in the following extracts:

Extract 4.21:

PA	<i>They have teaching and learning materials. The whole school is full of resources.</i>
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Extract 4.21(i):

PC	<i>I <u>have</u> sufficient and if I don't, I make my own resources because I find learners with learning barrier need a lot of concrete apparatus.</i>
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Extract 4.22:

PD	<i>I don't think its adequate at all because when I look at how different the learners are, because there are those learners who depend on sight, those ones who want to touch, taste and use the senses, we don't have, we are limited in terms of resources.</i>
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PA and PC indicated that the school has enough resources to be used for teaching and learning in the classroom. PC further said that she improvises by bringing her own materials to teach learners. However, PD's response was different from PA and PC responses, as she noted, there are "*no adequate resources*". Teaching and learning resources were not available to enhance the effectiveness of schools. According to Okongo et al. (2015:135), the necessary resources that ought to be available for teaching and learning include material resources such as assistive devices and teaching aids; occupational therapist and physical facilities such as laboratories, libraries, and classrooms.

Many researchers argue that the availability of the textbooks appears to be the most consistent factor in predicting teacher effectiveness towards teaching in primary schools. Studies in different countries show correlation between textbooks and educational achievement (Mupa and Chinooneka, 2015).

PD, who is the HOD, gave a breakdown of categories of learners and their need of diverse learning resources. The possible meaning of PA and PC's responses is that they may not be aware of different types of learners in their classes and the different resources that need to be used for the benefit of learners with different learning styles.

#### **4.12. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

Classroom observations were held after the interviews in order to reflect mainly on the second purpose of the SIAS policy, which aims at improving access to quality education for vulnerable learners and those who experience barriers due to language issues (SIAS, 2014:11). The classroom observations schedule was used to guide the researcher during observations. (see Appendix G).

Classroom observations were undertaken so as to determine how teachers responded to the objective strategies that might enhance learner support in Foundation Phase collaborate verbally with each other on learning reading. Two classroom observations were held in each of the three Foundation Phase classrooms, as a follow up to the interviews that were conducted with Teachers A, B and C, in which the researcher played the role of a non-participant observer. The researcher observed the teachers teaching English reading lessons as the medium of instruction used to teach other learning areas in the Foundation Phase at this school at which the research was conducted.

The researcher made use of the Reading Observation Framework adapted from *The Reading Teacher* (Vol. 53, no. 5, 2000) to assess teachers reading lessons (see Appendix J). The following information was gathered: lesson preparation; teachers' teaching methods and style; classroom interactions; teacher-learner interaction; learner-learner interaction; teaching and learning resources; classroom assessment. All the observation occurred during reading time.

#### 4.13. TEACHING METHODS AND STYLE

There were two approaches to teaching reading that were used, namely, the phonic approach and the language experience approach. The phonic approach is based on the idea that learners should first learn the sound of each symbol or letter. The language experience approach involved reading materials being created by recording the young learners' spoken languages. Reading must be based on the language and the learner's experiences.

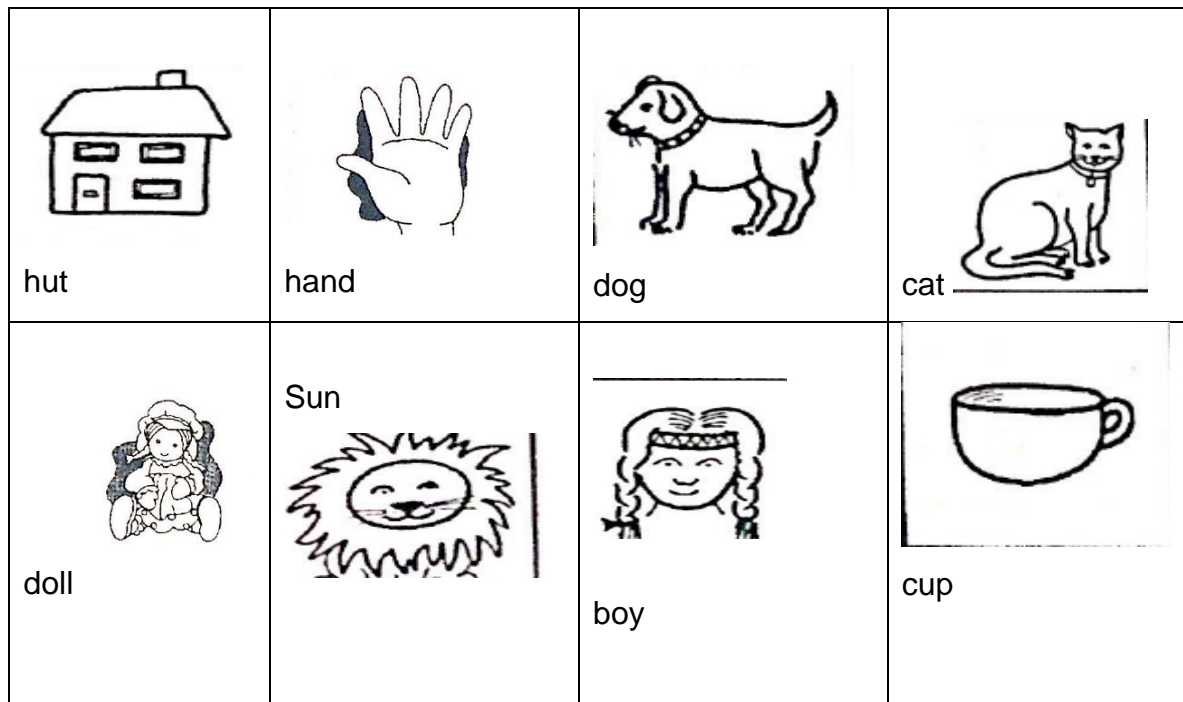
The purpose of investigating the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in diverse classrooms was to find answers to the research questions focusing mainly on diversity and learner support strategies. The phonic approach method was mostly used by teachers A and B, as a fundamental approach in teaching reading English. The teaching methods used by Teacher A and Teacher B followed a cooperative strategy in presenting the lessons (Vygotsky, 1978:86). Most of the learners were actively involved in their groups, as they discussed worksheets for homework and classwork assessments. However, Teacher C used the language experience approach, which was meant to assist the learners in realising that oral and written language are linked. As noted earlier, the complexity of the LoLT curtailed progress, because in the language experience approach, reading must be based on the language, and on the learner's experience. During the introduction of the lesson, learners just sat and listened to the teacher's story, which they could not discuss and interpret, because it was not in most learners' home languages, or connected to their experiences.

The teacher introduced her lessons by saying, *"today we are going to discuss the map of our country..."* and she wrote the topic on the chalkboard: *"My place in the world"*. She explained step-by-step from the child's home to the town in the district, to the province, to the country, to the continent, to the world, until getting to the point where the learners wrote answers on the given worksheets. The learners who understood the language of learning and teaching were active participants contributing to the creation of the stories they read.

#### 4.14. LESSON PREPARATIONS

The participating teachers prepared two lessons separately on the topic of reading. The lessons were broken up into two categories, and were planned before observation, on topics such as pre-reading skills (phonics), and reading strategies (shared reading). The topics taught on phonics were easy consonant: (f, t, b, m, s, p, n and d) and short vowels: (a, e, i, o and u), which were used to build words such as (cat, fat, sat, rat, mat). The teachers made use of valuable guidelines for teaching phonics: they used phonics to teach learners to identify unknown words, when learners become *au faire* with remembering words from sounds then the teachers followed a systematic approach. The systematic approach helps learners to identify words and increase their ability to comprehend what they read. Teacher A also prepared lessons where the phonics were taught in an informal way such as a game where learners would play a game calling out words starting with a {b} sound: boy, bat, bus, big) or giving words with the vowel {i} pig, pin, in,) Teacher B prepared a lesson where learners were asked to find words/pictures on charts that began with letters such as (h, f, b, c, d, and s). Fig 4:1 below illustrates how Teacher B prepared the chart for learners to sound the first letters of the pictures on the chart:









Fig. 4.1:



Teacher C used the functional approach in her lesson preparation this approach was meant to help learners recognise words and phonics. The workbook page was used to serve the purpose of sounding and reading words. See Fig. 4.2 that follows.

Fig 4.4:2

Say the name of each picture and find its name in the list below.

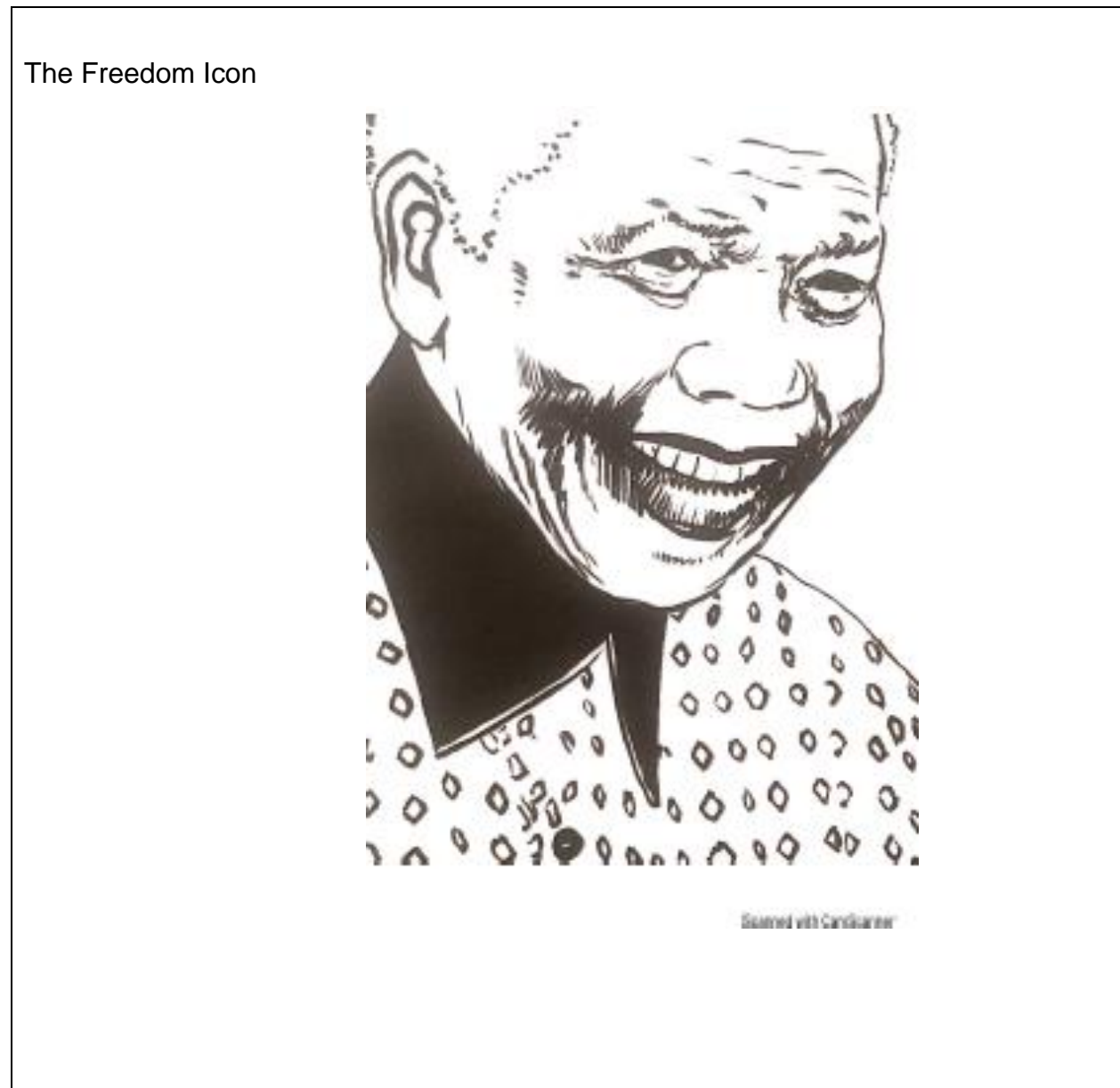
			
			

Bus, hoe, book. Bell, dog, duck, mat, school, hand, fish, box, scotch-cart, goat. Kite  
Kite, bag

The topics taught on shared reading were done using posters, stories from DB blue books, and a map of South Africa. Teachers introduced the key words and told the story using pictures, teachers also allowed learners to retell the stories and dramatise as well. Teacher A used a visual text of a poster for example fig4.3



Fig: 4.3:

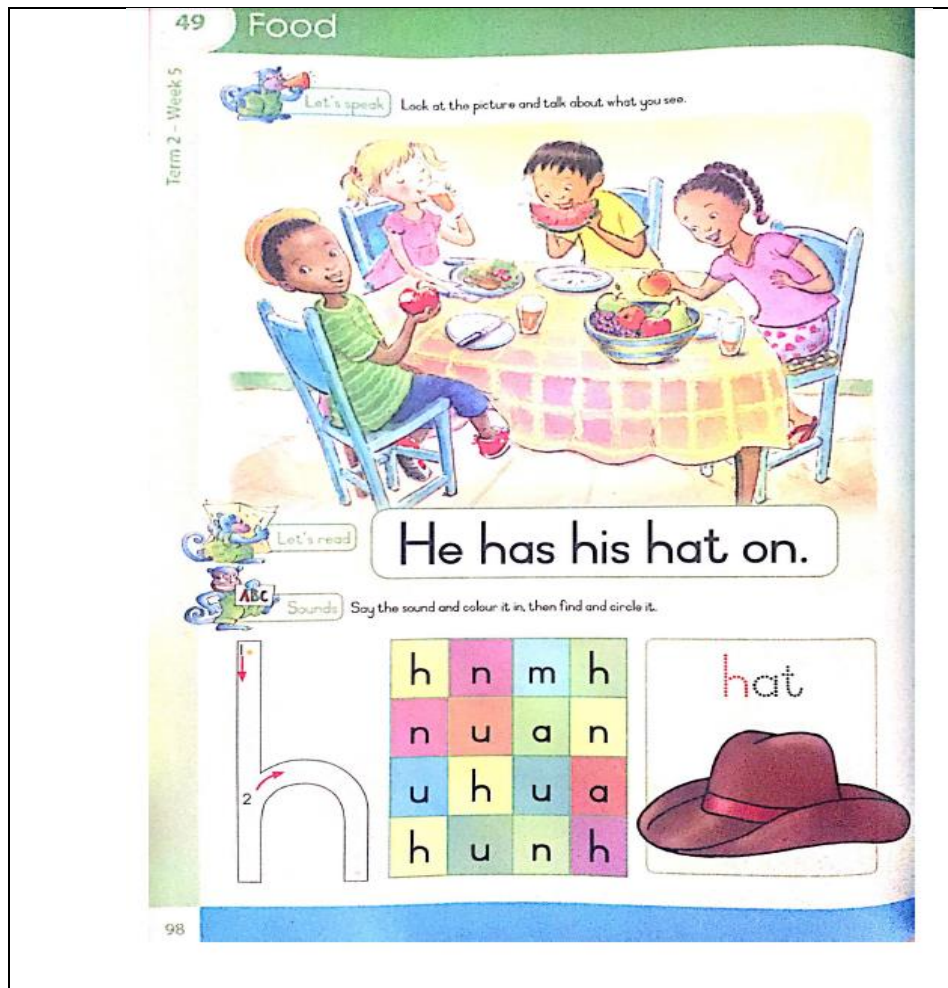


The teacher prepared the lesson in such a way that enabled learners to talk about the picture of Nelson Mandela on the poster. Learners were given pages to draw the picture that was on the poster, working in groups of four to six learners. Each group would generate a different story, writing it down, and they would do shared reading with the teacher's assistance. The picture assisted learners to predict the vocabulary to use in their stories, such as "*freedom, Mandela day, rainbow nation, humanity, ubuntu, respect, dignity*". The learners would discuss in their groups what they know about the person on

the poster and write down stories. This orientated the learners and made them understood better as they read their stories. After reading, learners dramatised what they wrote about the person whose picture was on the poster.

Teacher B prepared shared reading using a story taken from the DBE textbook, worksheet 49, p. 98. The topic of the story was Food. See Fig 4.4 below.

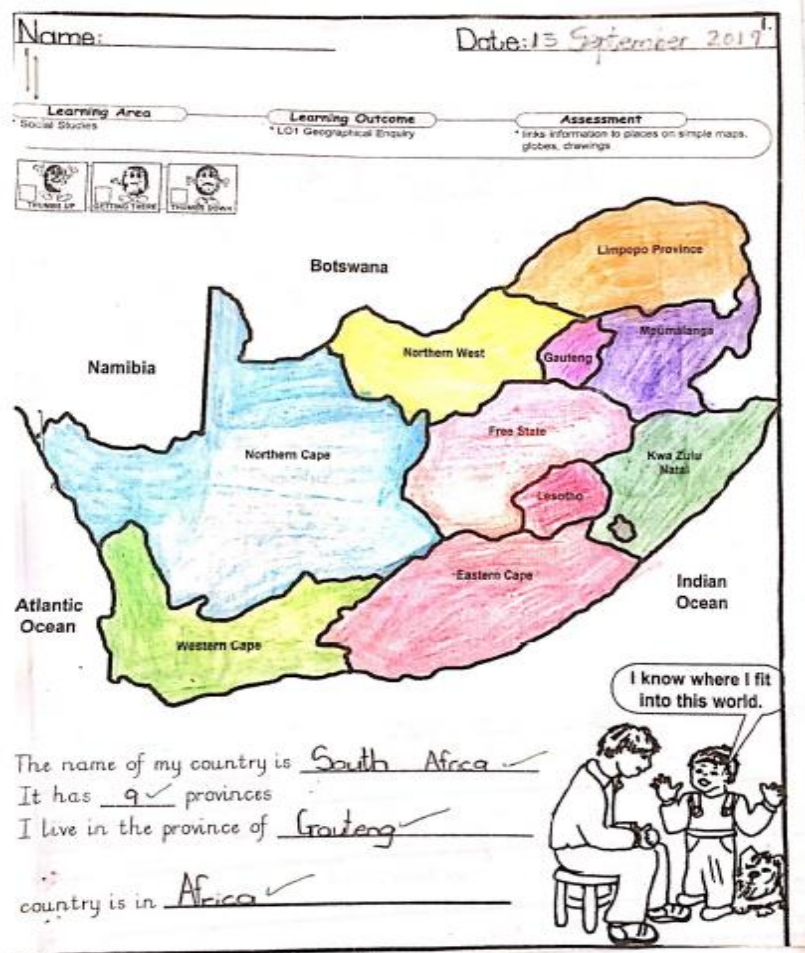
Fig 4:4



Teacher B showed learners page 98 in their DBE workbooks (English Home Language Grade 1, Book 1, 9<sup>th</sup> Ed. 2019). The books introduced key words about the story namely *hat*, *his*, and *has*. The teacher told the story to the learners using the pictures in the story for example: “Look at the children. She is eating a watermelon. Look at the girl who is

drinking juice. The boy is going to eat an apple. Another girl is also going to eat an apple.” The teacher pointed to the picture that depicted the sentence as she reads to the learners. In this lesson, the teacher taught the consonant “h” and learners found the letter on the page and then circled it. The teacher and the learners talked about the boy and the hat on his head, and they read the sentences under the picture: “He has his hat on”. The teacher read with all learners and allowed them a few minutes to dramatise eating food and wearing hats just like what was displayed on the reading page. Teacher C integrated reading lesson with life skills, learners were given a map of South Africa, and they learnt to read the names of the provinces, they went on to complete and learn to read the sentences. Fig 4:5 below indicate how learners did shared reading using the map of South Africa.

Fig. 4.5:



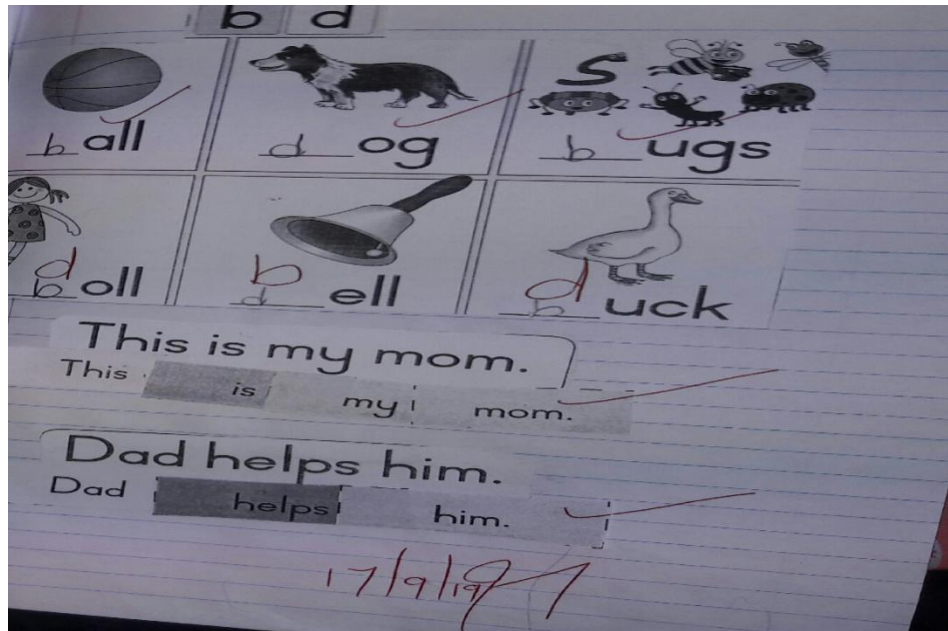
The teacher started by introducing new words and major words like *country*, *province*, and *world* in order for learners to become acquainted with the story about their place in their homes, country, and the world at large. As indicated earlier on, Teacher C used the language experience approach, and she allowed learners to talk about events that are famous in their home provinces. The teacher wrote down what learners told her about their country/provinces. Learners gave titles to what the teacher wrote, and they also had a chance to complete and read sentences on given worksheets, as shown in Fig 4:5. Learners did individual or paired reading. Dramatisation was done by pairs talking about interesting things found in their provinces, for example museums, heroes' acres', famous stadiums, and/or national parks.

#### **4.15. CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS**

The classroom interactions followed the form of the teacher's questioning style to involve her learners. The role of teachers during the interaction when using questioning method provided support structures to develop learning, as Vygotsky (1978:86) pointed out. Teacher A: posed questions and the learners raised their hands up in response to the questions during the lesson. Fig 4.1 below illustrates how the teacher would raise the work sheet and call out to learners such as this: "*Wadza, Tadiwa, Chido* [pseudonyms], tell us: "*what are the words written under the pictures?*"

*"May you please read the sentences you have completed under the pictures?"*

Fig.4.1



Most of the learners could not read the sentences, which supports what Teacher A indicated in the semi-structured interviews: “she sat with learners that could not read at all”. Despite what the teacher stated during interview about learner reading status, the classroom atmosphere was print-rich, and learners were encouraged to engage in discussions where they shared story lines of pictures on charts, for example, picture dictionaries or word books.

Teacher B described her interaction with learners as a process that is directed by the learning area, where what she taught directed her. She did not mention anything about the learners’ learning style or the use of LoLT.

Teacher C during the interaction used a questioning method that did not enhance the learners’ learning and development, and also did not help the learners to use known sentences, phrases and words in spontaneous conversation. The teacher asked questions and very few learners responded to the questions. The teacher asked questions that elicited few responses, which supports what was indicated in the interview, namely that only a few learners understood English.

Teacher D was the head of the Foundation Phase and highlighted that the shortages of resources impacted negatively on how teachers taught in classes. Thus she elaborated about resources:

*I don't think it is adequate, because when I look at how different the learners are, in our school situation, we are limited in terms of resources. We don't have the audio the visuals we only have the charts its visual, neh? And kinetics, where they have to touch and taste, and I feel we don't have such things; the resources are limiting us.*

According to teachers 'perspective shortages of resources limited teachers' classroom interactions. Teachers did not have appropriate or sufficient assistive devices to interact with learners effectively.

#### **4.16. TEACHER-LEARNER INTERACTION**

The interaction followed the skill and strategy instruction method, namely asking and providing a clear explanation about the structure of the skill or strategy to be used in a meaningful context. Reading skill and strategy instruction moved children toward independent use through scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978:86), by at first asking questions in order to determine how to provide the necessary support to the learners. In the initial classroom observation, the learners seemed to be docile, as they were not actively involved, and only a few learners responded to the teacher's questions. The results of classroom observations indicated that learners were encouraged to activate their background knowledge through the use of K-V-A: kinetic, visual, and auditory teaching aids. The teacher introduced and discussed the new vocabulary words in a meaningful context, focusing on those new words that were central to the understanding of the words or the story. In the lessons presented by Teacher A, it seemed that she asked the questions based on issues familiar to learners, in order help the learners develop interest in the lesson. Moreover, Teacher A in the first lesson that was observed, taught reading using the phonic approach. For example, she showed children the chart with a picture of

a rat on a mat and she asked: *'what is on the picture; what can you say about the rat; what colour is the mat?'*

She taught a vowel followed by a consonant for example 'at' is 'a' and 't' the next step new words were formed from consonant and vowel such **mat** which was: consonant-vowel-consonant:**m-a-t**. Words like **sat**, **rat** and **fat** were taught and the short sentences were later formed as follows:

*The rat is fat.*

*Is the rat on the mat?*

*The fat rat sat.*

*The rat sat on the mat.*

She sought thereby to determine whether the learners were able to understand picture reading, and how to determine their general knowledge of the phonetic sounds, before she could introduce the consonant or vowel to form words leading to sentences. Teacher A sought to ascertain whether the learners might be able to form short sentences with new words. The teacher helped learners learn the words by sounds with objects, such as mats and rats, which are familiar to learners. As Landsberg et al. (2016:74) indicated, activities to promote reading development stem from graphophonic information, viz.: phonological awareness; syntactic knowledge; reading fluency and semantic knowledge; and comprehension. Teacher B appeared to have also paid attention to the fact that phonics can be used with whole word methods when giving learners instruction to read during teacher –learner interaction, as she sometimes asked the learners to read fluently and answer questions such as:

*'where is the rat?'*

*'Is the rat on the mat?'* which showed that she was observing whether learners were aware of the sounds or the words/sentence, and whether they understood what they read.

Contrary to what Teacher A and B were doing during teaching reading lesson, Teacher C was using the language experience approach, where every day, home and classroom experiences were used to provide media. For example, printed instructions:



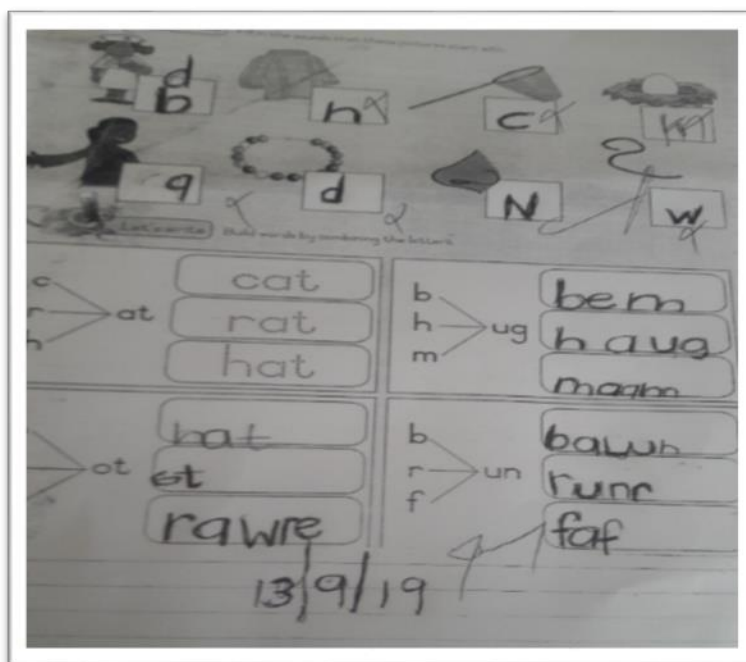
*'Wash your hands'*

*'Cook the food'*

*'Throw the ball'*

Teacher C also made use of the labels on charts or poster to help learners complete given worksheets. For example, Fig 4.2 shows how learners used labels and words to complete given worksheets. For example, Fig 4.2 shows how learners used labels and words to complete and built words.

Fig. 4.2:



The purpose of using this method was to develop the correct concept of what a letter, word, or sentence was. The teacher and the learner were supposed to discuss the printed instructions and ask questions about hands, balls, nose, beads, eggs, and food. The learners could not respond because they did not understand language of teaching and learning (LoLT). Learners need to understand and use a language before formal reading. This is one of the most important reasons why instruction ought to take place in the learners' home language, if possible (Davin, 2013:152). On the other hand, the teacher did not understand either Afrikaans or any vernacular that were mother tongues for



children in her class. There was no way the teacher could code-switch or translate instructions into the language that learners would understand. For example, some of the learners in Teacher C's class did not understand what the teacher instructed and (*Morena*: pseudonym) asked another learner sitting next him this question: '*Tichere e ne e reng?*' (Sesotho for 'what did the teacher say?'). A learner called Thando (pseudonym) timidly spoke to the teacher, pleading with her to repeat the instructions: '*ngicela ungasho futhi?*' (isiNdebele for 'would you please say it again?'). (Pandey 2014:63), affirmed that the mother tongue is the primary means through which a child makes sense of her world and connects with others. The implication of this is that (*Morena and Thando*: pseudonyms) could neither make sense of content or connect with other learners, because of the language that was not known to them. A variety of challenges that were mentioned by teachers during interviews such as LoLT, was also noticed. The complexity of the medium of instruction was mentioned by teachers in the interview. Teachers were supporting learners that could not do easy tasks given to them, simply because they could not understand English. Prior to observation, the researcher sat in an interview with participants who had this to say about the LoLT:

PA: Our *children don't speak English they speak slang*, because that's the language in their environment.

PC: *Some do not understand LoLT but the Afrikaans and other language I can't get through to them, because I can only speak English.*

The LoLT becomes a barrier for *Morena and Thando* (pseudonyms), who were not able to understand what Teacher C was teaching in her reading lesson. Lack of knowledge of the vernacular /mother tongue of the learner by the teacher during the lesson seemed to have deprived the learners of the necessary support. The observation revealed that there was need for teachers to have prepared lesson preparation in the languages that would be understood by learners.

#### **4.17. LEARNER-LEARNER INTERACTION**

The learners in Teacher A and B's classes were given the opportunity to learn reading from familiar sounds to words, and then on to sentences, building during classroom observations. According to Johnson and Johnson (2014:484-48), the size of cooperative group work depends on time, experience, age of learners, and the material that is being taught. Teachers appeared to have adopted group work to teach the phonetical approach in a short period of time, thus the groups were also made smaller, containing two to four learners. Smaller groups such as pairs are more effective, with the smaller the group the greater contribution of each learner (Landsberg et al., 2016:109). Learners worked in groups, sounding letters and taking turns to build words and sentences. The teachers moved from group to group, listening and correcting learners, they did not interrupt them even if they spoke in vernacular, or Afrikaans. Teacher A understood Afrikaans and Teacher B understood most of the vernacular, so whenever a child spoke in a language the teacher did not understand, the teacher called in their colleague for clarification. It was interesting to note that cooperation between the two teachers was extended in both their classrooms, where learners in their groups helped each other with translation and code-switching. Teacher A and B used group work of about four learners of different abilities or same abilities in each group, because these teachers were teaching in adjacent classes, where was very easy for them to assist one another.

Teacher C did not use group teaching a strategy that is normally used to encourage learners to get to know and trust each other, communicate accurately, accept and support each other, as they learn and resolve conflicts among themselves (Johnson and Johnson, 2009:369). During teaching time, Teacher C did not assign learners to groups, but instead gave learners worksheets for individual learners to complete. The learners exchanged ideas by giving each other their individual worksheets and challenged one another on sounds words and sentence-building, but the majority could not ask the teacher for assistance, because they just did not understand LoLT. The teacher walked around, but could not assist the learners during teaching and learning. The teacher also made use of a chart of sounds and pictures from "a-f" for learners to use (see Appendix K). Teacher

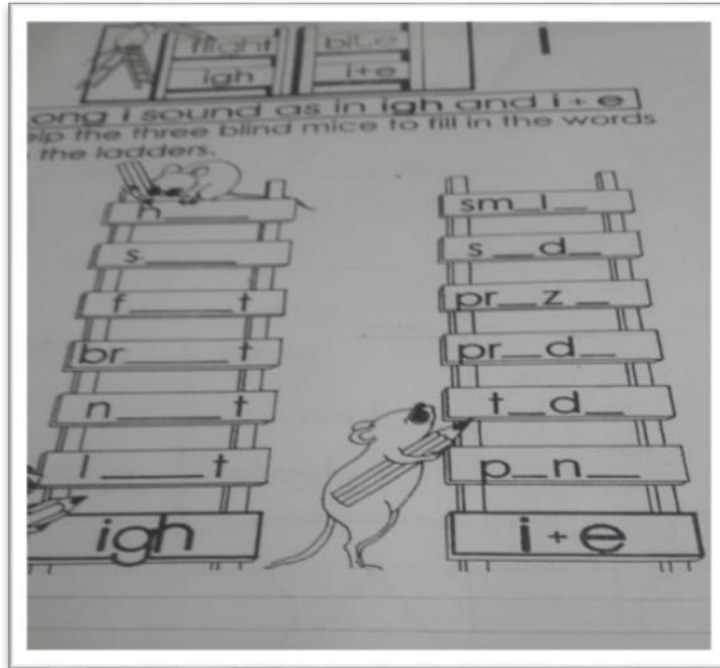
encouraged her learners “...to sound the letters in turns”, when introducing individual sounding of phonics and naming pictures, for example (*a-apple-ambulance, axe, b-balloon, banana, bat; c—cup, car, cat; d-dog, dinosaur, dots; e- egg, elephant; f-fish, flame, fire*). Complete instructions and sufficient time to name the pictures during report backs were given to learners.

The learners were also active in sounding the letters and naming the pictures as they were clearly printed on the chart. The learners took turns to sound letters and give names of pictures on the chart. The teacher walked around to assist the learners to sound letters. She also helped them with the correct names where they seemed not to know the correct names. The learners did not know words like “dinosaur, ambulance, and flame”.

#### **4.18. TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES**

The teachers used posters, charts and worksheets that were ready made. According to Davin (2013:152), to be able to read and spell, with ease, learners require a language-rich environment. Some of the charts and some of the worksheets used were part of the learners’ environment, which, according to Davin 2013, may affect the learning process by promoting reading if presented well or may discourage reading if not presented well. Fig 4:3 below is illustrative of one of the many examples of worksheets used to teach phonics and reading by the teachers.

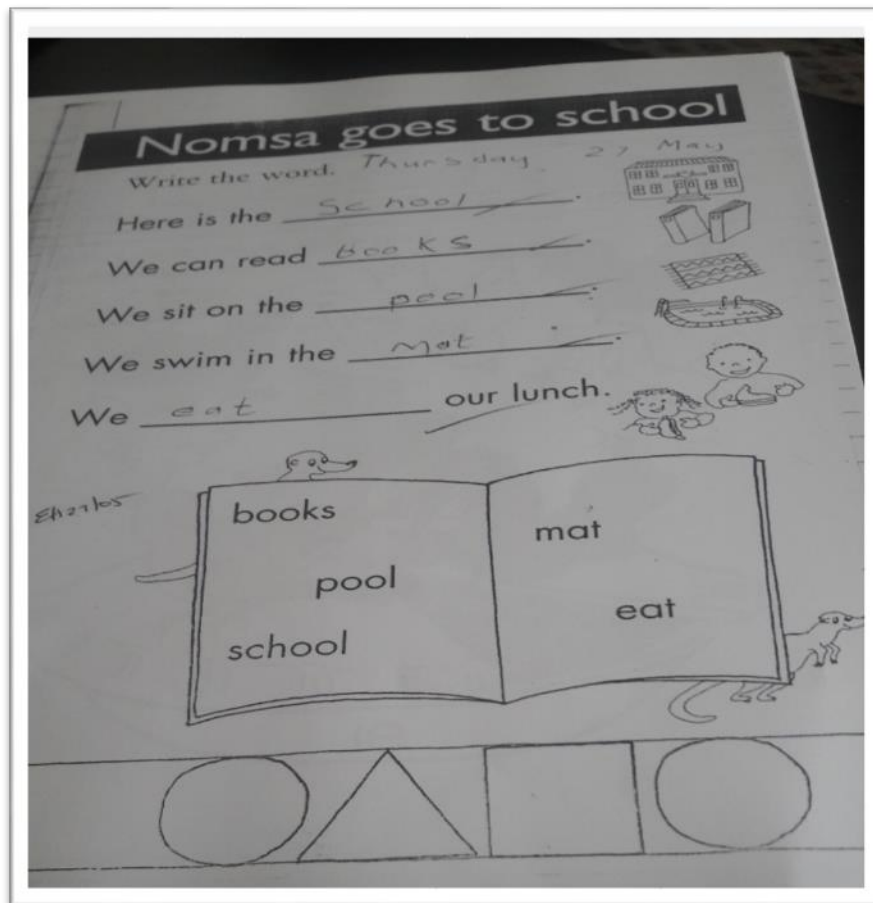
Fig: 4:3



Some of the words that children in Teacher A's classroom were able to build with sound "igh" are **high, sigh, fight, bright, night** and **light** and with the sound "i+ e" learners built words like, **pine, tide, pride prize, side,** and **smile.**

Teacher B's learners were given words to use to complete sentences for example: **pool, eat:** "We eat our lunch" and "We swim in the pool." The words were provided under the sentences which the learners completed. Fig. 4.4 illustrates how words were also used to complete sentences and learning to read.

Fig. 4.4:



Teachers made use of charts and worksheets in teaching reading in their Foundation Phase classrooms. Landsberg et al. (2016:174) indicate that reading is an integrated mode of communication with Intra-active and interactive facets. It is the interactive part of reading that I discovered to be consistent with the Foundation Phase teachers' methods of teaching young learners how to read.

Young learners in the classroom' were given an opportunity to interact with the vowels and words on the chart posters and worksheets, where they processed the sense

intended by the author, and used the information from the printed text to generate personal meaning (Crystal, 2010). Teachers A and B worked with learners and ran around sourcing all media available to assist learners to read and write. Teachers always gave the learners handouts and worksheets to use when building words and sentences. The dominoes were used several times when new words were taught, which showed that the teachers were motivated by the learners' progress. Teacher C did not use a lot of worksheets during teaching. It was evident during classroom observation that a shortage of resources hindered learning, because it was evident that learners who were hard of hearing and others with sight problems were not catered for. In Teacher A's class there was a boy Kuda (pseudonym), who held the cards and charts very close to his face because he could not see properly. During group work, he constantly fought with other learners, because he wanted to have all the worksheets to himself. Unfortunately, the teacher did nothing to assist the learner, likely not noticing the impairment. Then, when I went to Teacher C for the second time, there were two learners, Temba and Tsidi: (pseudonyms), who constantly disrupted other learners by asking "*yintoni*" (isiXhosa for 'what is it?') and "*Tichere e reng?*" Sesotho for "what did the teacher say?" Their questions were not due to the LoLT barrier, since they were conversing comprehensively with the fellow learners. It was because of hearing challenges. Just like Teacher A, Teacher C did not notice or provide appropriate resources to alleviate the learners' challenges.

It was evident during observation that Teachers A and B, out of three, exhibited consistency and uniformity in their strategies for reading lessons. The complexity of the medium of instruction was mentioned during the interview especially in Teacher C's class. Teachers were supporting learners that could not do easy tasks given to them, simply because they could not understand English. This is one of the most important reasons why instruction should take place in the learner's home language if possible (Davin, 2013:152).

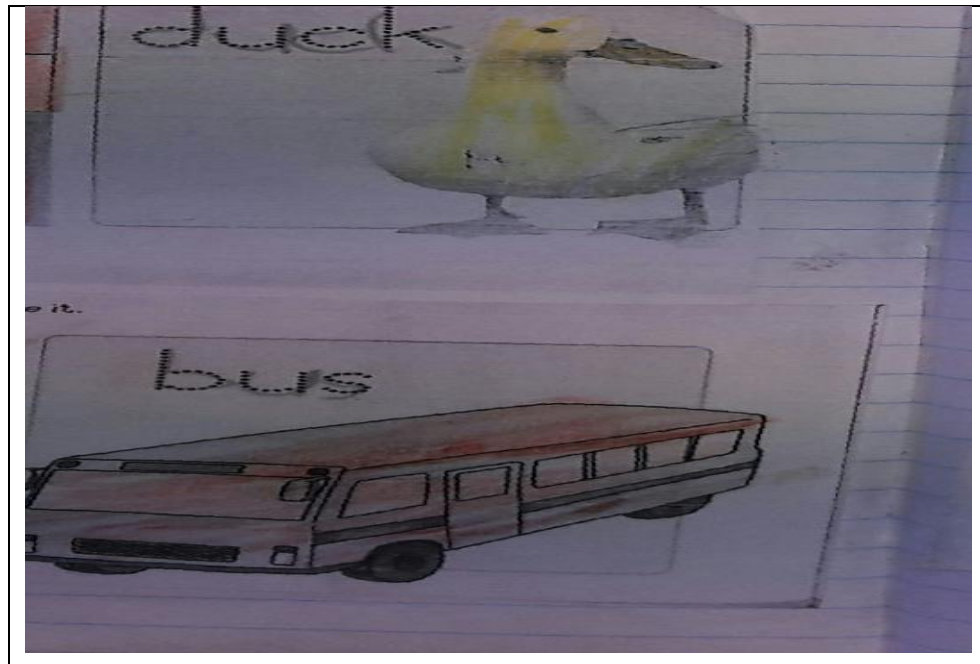
The researcher also wanted to conduct follow up on the challenges of class sizes and how this impacted negatively on the teaching and learning resources, and determined that not all participants had enough resources for the larger classes. There was also no space to manoeuvre in their classrooms.

#### 4.19. CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Teachers' classroom assessments were done in English. According to Davin (2013), continuous assessment is recommended to guarantee revision and going over concepts in calculating reading readiness. So, in these classrooms, the approach of administering activities and then providing the learners with answers formed part of the classroom assessment, which may be used to enhance the quality of reading readiness teaching and learning (Davin, 2013). The classroom assessment used by teachers was the monitoring of the learners' progress in sounding letters, building words, and reading sentences. Learners were given continuous assessment. Assessment should be ongoing throughout the learning, so as to determine whether the learner has mastered the outcomes set for a learning support session (Landsberg et al., 2016:114).

Teachers used homework and classwork using worksheets to assess their learners. In their assessments, teachers gave learners different activities to understand if their learners have acquired knowledge and skills of reading. Teachers gave learners reading activities and follow up in the same lesson giving the answers to the learners. For example, "What colour is *the duck and the bus*?" after posing such a question, the teacher would show learners a picture of the duck and the bus, as in Fig 4:5 below:

Fig 4:5



After showing learners a worksheet/chart, the learners would discuss answers in their groups, and provide feedback to the teacher and the whole class. The results showed that the learners were given opportunity to discuss or give their answers before the teacher could give the final answer. The learners showed motivation in relation to homework and classwork (Landsberg et al., 2016). The learners were allowed to discuss questions of the homework and class activities in the classroom in order to help the struggling learners.

By observing the teachers teaching, the researcher got the opportunity to sit in on two lessons in each of the three classroom observed, and made notes about the observations. This was beneficial as it gave an indication of how all the teachers in the Foundation Phase of the school interact with learners in order to ensure maximum learning and reading readiness was taking place.

It gave the researcher an opportune to observe how the Foundation Phase functioned, from the point of view on an onlooker. The researcher was able to take notes and reflect on what had been seen. The observation benefited the researcher by seeing how teachers tried accommodating learners needs in a learning environment, however



learners were not always encouraged to use their voice in a way that benefitted them. The field notes made by the researcher help to put the school into context, and were also included in the themes generated from interviews.

#### **4.20 CONCLUSION ON THE TEACHER INTERVIEWS AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

The study indicated that teachers are willing to implement learner support to struggling learners in a diverse classroom, however for this to be effective, DBST must be on board. Adequate facilitators and team leaders must reach out to school that need assistance. Empowerment workshops on learner support need to be a regular nom.

#### **4.21. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

Document analysis of the learning and teaching documents that were being used by the teachers were analysed against the background of the following information. Firstly, the researcher wanted to check if the SBST and SBST were monitoring and controlling learner support in the Foundation Phase. Secondly, analysis of the documents was meant to establish whether teachers were differentiating curriculum according to learner diverse needs in the lesson plans, and whether their planning caters for different learning styles that would accommodate learners in their diverse classes.

Thirdly, the analysis was also meant to determine whether teachers had managed to identify the range of diverse learning needs as what is required by/in the learning support documents.

Data collected from documents revealed the following findings:

- mixed understanding was found with the teachers who participated in this study;
- teachers don't have some documents to be used to understand how to teach learners in diverse classrooms;
- teachers don't understand the SNAS document;

- no evidence from DBE officials to support teachers; and
- teachers lack knowledge of learner support book.

#### **4.22. MIXED UNDERSTANDING WAS FOUND WITH THE TEACHERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY**

The DBE has distributed SIAS policy of 2014 during the same time that the policy introduces new roles and responsibility for the education support system. SNAS. (see documents in the Appendix K). The documents are structured showing guidelines of how to interpret the policies with regards to learning and support.

The analysis of the learner support books: these are books in which learners write their “remedial work”, indicated that teachers are ill-versed in support work, due to the fact that they never mentioned anything about differentiation in their planning. Teachers gave in observation books, which were their work schedules, in place of learner support books, which were supposed to consist of a plan of work about the questions and activities. The observation or lesson plans were analysed so as to establish whether teachers’ planning was informed by SIAS, CAPS and White Paper 6 (2001). The diverse needs of learners, such as memory skills, comparative skills, application skills, as well as analysis of these skills, were missing in the teachers’ work plans.

#### **4.23. LACK OF NECESSARY DOCUMENTS**

Teachers did not have documents such as the screening identification assessment and support (SIAS), or the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and White paper 6 (2001). These documents are used to familiarise teachers with the teaching of learners in the diverse classrooms. Most of the lesson plans that were analysed in this study indicated that they had very little or no knowledge of the policy regarding learner support. The contents in their planning did not elaborate on the contents of learner support, curriculum differentiation, diversity, and inclusion that are informed by the three documents, mentioned earlier.

The SIAS Policy has the three major aims outlined below as follows:

- to provide the framework for a standardised approach to screening, identifying, assessing, and supporting learners who require additional support to enable them to perform to their potential in school;
- to promote early identification of learners who experience barriers to learning, thus enabling learners to have a positive experience of participation and inclusion at school; and
- to assist teachers, School-Based Support Teams and District-Based Support Teams in their efforts to meet the needs of all learners and to provide quality teaching and learning (DBE, 2017:8).

The document analysis revealed that teachers could not plan their work in line with the SIAS policy relevance, because they did not have the policy. The policy adopts a holistic approach to addressing the needs of learners, with the intent of supporting them in their current school and community, which is in line with an inclusive philosophy. The SIAS policy provides a clear, step-by-step and user-friendly guide regarding what to do when a learner is not performing as expected, and in terms of who is responsible for taking action at each step of the support process. However, these steps were not evident in the teachers' support lesson plans.

Another aim of the SIAS in learner support is to provide the framework for a standardised approach to screening, identifying, assessing, and supporting learners who require additional support to enable them to perform to their potential in school (DBE, 2017:8). Since Foundation Phase teachers did not have the SIAS policy, there was no way they could have identified learners who experience barriers to learning, thus enabling learners to have a positive experience of participation and inclusion at school. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Bronfenbrenner's bio ecological theory underpins this study, emphasizing a holistic approach taken in this study that places the child at the centre of teaching and learning.

The SIAS policy adopts a holistic approach to addressing the needs of learners, with the intent of supporting them in their current school and community, which is in line with an inclusive philosophy (DBE, 2017:8). Foundation Phase teachers' lesson plans did not have any indication regarding what to do when a learner is not performing as expected, and in terms of who is responsible for taking action at each step of the support process.

The (CAPS) policy document is like a bible that needs to be followed religiously by teachers teaching in diverse classrooms, because it stipulates how curriculum should be differentiated in order to respond to learner diversity.

Curriculum differentiation is a key strategy for responding to the needs of learners with diverse learning styles and needs. It involves processes of modifying, changing, adapting, extending, and varying teaching methodologies, teaching strategies, assessment strategies and the content of the curriculum. It takes into account each learner's ability levels, interests and backgrounds (DBE, 2017:10). The teachers' lesson plans lacked the modification, adaptations, teaching and assessment strategies stipulated in the CAPS policy document. There was no differentiation of the curriculum by teachers, where it appeared as though they have not been empowered about curriculum differentiation. For lesson plans to be constant with learner support, differentiation should be adhered to at all cost, where the following constitute the principles of curriculum differentiation:

Principles of curriculum differentiation adapted from (DBE, 2017:10):

- acknowledgment that all learners are different;
- learner differences will influence HOW they learn;
- teachers are capable of teaching all learners; and
- teachers are responsible for providing opportunities for all learners to achieve their full potential.

Learners' support work that was analysed did not show the learner's cognitive differences by way of adapting teaching and learning that is learner-paced and learner based. All

learner support lesson plans were the same for different learners with different learning needs, where no part of the curriculum was adapted to match the learners' level of understanding. According to the DBE (2017:10), there are four main aspects in the curriculum that needs to be adapted: (a) classroom environment; (b) curriculum content; (c) teaching methods; and (d) assessment strategies. In this section, the researcher is interested in the curriculum content. Content is what the teacher teaches and what the learner is expected to learn. Fig 4.1 illustrates ways of adapting content in order for learners to learn according to their learning styles. Three ways of adapting content, namely in terms of abstractness, variety and complexity, were not evident in the teachers' lesson plans. Some of the support work were too abstract for learners to comprehend it was difficult for learners to grasp. No expanded opportunities were made available in the support work to cater for learners' level of understanding. Topics that were planned to support learners were not contextualised, for example, reading topics about the [Red hat] could have been about learners' own hats. Learners could have found it easier to read, create or write a story about their own real or imagined hats. Contextualising the content is a way of making learning and teaching inclusive, thereby conforming to the main principle of the White Paper 6, which states all learners can learn with support.

White Paper 6 (2001) sets itself against the practice of segregation and labelling. Instead WP6 advocates for support by means of which the teachers search for learners' strengths, which are imbedded in their diversity, and assist the struggling child to fully attain in learning and development.

#### **4.24. TEACHERS DO NOT UNDERSTAND SNAS DOCUMENT**

The special needs assessment (SNA) document is a document designed just like the individual support plan, to be completed by the teacher in collaboration with the SBST for learners, who experience diverse support needs. It is planned and it can be changed if it is not successful. SIAS policy encourages teacher to use the SNA if they identified learners who need special needs support (DBE, 2014). Teachers play a crucial role in

providing the special needs support, however the lesson plans provided by the teachers in this study did not show conformity to the following steps of the SNAS:

- assessing the present level of functioning;
- formulating the outcomes;
- selecting the curriculum content;
- selecting teaching methods and strategies;
- selecting teaching and learning strategies that the learner should acquire;
- selecting learning and teaching support material;
- implementing the SNA;
- assessing learner progress; and
- evaluation of SNA.

Meaningful completion of special needs assessment depends on the understanding of various learning and development needs of the learners. As mentioned earlier, the selection of the curriculum content is central to the effectiveness of all the outlined steps above. The SNAS that some teachers have were not completed, they were just inserted in the learners' "remedial books". The data that was collected on documents was done in September, towards the end of the year, and no information about learner support was indicated by the teachers on the SNAS. This was indicative of lack of knowledge about the special needs assessment documents.

#### **4.25. NO EVIDENCE FROM DBE OFFICIALS TO SUPPORT TEACHERS**

The core purpose of the DBE is to be coordinating all learner, teacher, curriculum and development support in the school. The DBE seem not to be fully supporting the teachers that are facing challenges with learners' diverse needs, however as mentioned earlier, there was no evidence of DBE support in the teacher's lesson plans. Additionally, lack of records of special needs specialists in the teachers' work plans was indicative of lack of support from DBE.

The study showed that there was no evidence of teacher support from the DBE. The SIAS policy document indicates that DBE officials should provide support to teachers to teach in diverse classroom. When the researcher checked to see if the SBST and DBST were monitoring the work of the teachers, there was no evidence of monitoring tools, books were not signed or stamped. No work was controlled and monitored, it seems official were not tracking how they do their support, how do the teachers use different learning styles to address diversity (see DA and PC in Appendix K). The DBE can afford to give support to teachers, who in turn will support learners.

#### **4.2.6. TEACHERS LACK KNOWLEDGE OF LEARNER SUPPORT BOOK**

The analysis found that Foundation Phase teachers were not conversant with the learner support book, did not know the difference between support and remedial work. One can argue that if the Foundation Phase teachers are unsure of how to differentiate support from remedial teaching, they will find it difficult to support learners in a way that is informed by inclusivity. The use of remedial books implies that teachers might not be aware that the remedial is no longer consistent with support. Teachers were not aware that when doing remedial, they seek for weaknesses in learners and they will exclude them from the rest of the class. White Paper 6 sets itself against this practice of segregation and labelling. Instead, the WP6 advocates for support in which the teachers look for learners' strengths, which are imbedded in their diversity and assist the struggling child to fully attain in learning and development. The researcher discovered that learners with any different or more specific disability were singled out, and that learners were blamed for not writing correct answers, for not finishing their tasks, and for being clumsy. The teachers drew up remedial work for the struggling learners with the intent to refer them to special schools. No support, according to SIAS, was evident. The analysis revealed that teachers who lack insight as to how to support learners make up rushed remedial work, and where possible a diagnostic is made to be placed in specialised environments and inevitably categorisation and labelling (Landsberg, 2016:6).

#### **4.2.7. CONCLUSION**

There are ambiguities in the policies, where screening and assessment, curriculum differentiation, diversity, and inclusivity were not fully explained so as to be considered by teachers. As indicated earlier, the stress is on the national as they generate policies which are sent down to provinces and districts to implement according to their needs in support of learners. However, it appears as if there are no support strategies forthcoming from the DBE. The findings revealed that the Foundation Phase teachers had various needs in terms of support that would empower them to support learners, and outline strategies for individual learners as is instructed in the SIAS, CAPS, and Education White Paper 6.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

The study investigated the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in implementing learner support. Summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study are covered in this chapter. A qualitative approach was used to collect data. Understanding how teachers' perceive and implement support to all learners is vital, because it could be consistent with learners' maximum potential performance, and hence academic performance would be enhanced. Research shows that, although teachers are not against learner support, it is their lack of capacity and the education systems in their schools such as overcrowding, LoLT, and curriculum inflexibility that is hampering the implementation of learner support. Data was analysed using a linear, hierarchical approach, building from the bottom to the top, but Creswell sees it as more interactive in practice, because the various stages are interrelated and not always visited in the order presented (Creswell, 2014:247).

Based on this analysis, recommendations are made regarding how to strengthen learner support following good practice (Nel *et al.*, 2014). The aims and objectives of this study were covered by the topics on the interview guides, which allowed the research participants to discuss what they do to ensure that learner support is implemented and managed without obstacles, as well as to identify the requirements of its successful implementation. The research question of the study was answered by the following objectives:

- to explore teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms;
- to determine how teachers, provide learning support; and
- to develop strategies that can enhance learner support in Foundation Phase.

## 5.2. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The department of Education has introduced the SIAS with the hope of assisting teachers to render learner support at an early age in schools. The study revealed that although the Department of Education has introduced the SIAS there is a likelihood of other challenges within the school and the system. Some of the challenges are a result of overcrowding in the classrooms. Findings revealed that teachers are willing to support struggling learners, however large classes coupled with diverse learning needs of learners seemed to be a challenge. These findings responded to the first sub –research question which explored the Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms in the Johannesburg North District. The study revealed that four teachers who have more than 10 years of experience teaching Foundation Phase had more than 50 learners in the classes even though according to Department of Education, teacher –learner ratio is 45 learners. This indicated that the classrooms were overcrowded. Hence teachers were facing the challenges of supporting learners in diverse classrooms according to their learning styles. The second sub- research question was on how Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support in the Johannesburg North District. The study revealed that teachers were not fully capacitated to address the diversity of struggling learners as a result, support needs assessment (SNA) documents that were analysed during document analysis leaves a lot to be desired. Foundation Phase received visits from facilitators who empower them on method of dealing with diversity, however, the trainings are sporadic. The third sub- research question was on strategies that can enhance learner support in the Foundation Phase. Strategies and resources must be put in place to help teachers to support all learners. An interconnected approach, as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1979) in chapter 2.is needed as it is a strategy where all the different stakeholders work together interactively and that can be useful in the implementation of learner support in diverse classrooms. The strategy of empowering teachers in order for them to support learners made very little impact. Teachers are not fully empowered because of time and human resources constraints.

Whatever knowledge they get from the workshops do not fully benefit the learners because the classes are too big.

The findings of this research confirmed that the implementation of learner support is not as effective as it ought to be. It was concluded that teachers' implementation of support to struggling learners in a diverse classroom is not effective and does not help learners to learn according to their learning styles. Various factors contribute to this lack of success, which include:

- (a) external factors, such as poor parental involvement, socioeconomic status; unemployment and poverty; and
- (b) systemic factors, such as a lack of adequate resources, overcrowded classes, time constraints, language barriers, poor policy interpretation at grass roots level, weak support structures and mainly, teachers' lack of capacity and lack of culture sensitivity.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the experiences of Foundation Phase Teachers in the implementation of learner support in Johannesburg North District. The relevant literature was reviewed in Chapters Two, in Chapter Three the methodology was discussed and in Chapter Four the data was analysed. However, the findings show that teachers want to support learners in diverse classrooms, nonetheless, the support and resources seems to be a challenge.

The DBST is tasked with providing integrated professional support services as required by the local schools (DBE, 2005 :17-18). This is a positive move that warrants positive comments as it guarantees release of expert learner support knowledge from DBST to teachers. Some of the core functions of the DBST are to develop, back up support structures in schools and provide support of learners through supporting teachers (DBE, 2005:22), but the analysis of the interview and teachers' s documents revealed that the support or monitoring from the DBST was very little. Teachers are willing to implement learner support, but need supportive response to be given by the education system and the school. Parents do a good thing of sending their children to school, however they are

not actively involved in their children' homework and other school activities like extra murals. This revealed that they do not value their children's education.

### **5.3. ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS.**

Teachers have indicated that they have learners whose differences vary to such an extent that they just don't know how to assist them, due to the difference in the medium of instruction, and the languages that are spoken at home by the learners. This was revealed when participants stated that they cannot help these learners, because she only speaks English. The study indicated that there is no viable means to recognise and support learning needs. Lack of recognition of diverse needs of learners was also confirmed by another teacher, who noted that she was not trained in inclusive education, and did not receive any training on how to support learners hence she relies on her experience to carry her through.

Findings confirm frustrations from the teachers due to lack of support from relevant stakeholders. Participants mentioned that the involvement of the SBST and DBST is very minimal. This confirms a poor relationship among SBST, DBST and the teachers in the classrooms. Several teachers indicated that they receive one or no training from the DSBT and SBST. This confirms that teachers are not trained on how to deal with learner diversity.

The researcher has the opinion that the teachers are not receiving enough support and are struggling with the challenges brought about by diversity and systemic barriers. It is mandatory for the DBE to train teachers in how to address inclusion and support and continue doing so because teachers are lifelong learners.

The following recommendations were made to address the ensuing statements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter Two it was noted that the Department of Education (2014) views inclusion as recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities. As the SIAS policy makes provision for identification, assessment, and support at an early age, the procedures used must enhance the teaching and learning practice. Therefore, recommendations that are made acknowledge that successful implementation of support is possible when teachers are responding to diversity through curriculum. As teachers have important responsibility in making sure that all learners from whatever background feel included and affirmed in the classroom. They should monitor their own beliefs, attitudes and behaviours when responding to learners. Some of the ways in which they can do this are:

- recognising any biases or stereotypes they may have absorbed;
- treating each learner as an individual and respecting all learners for who they are;
- avoiding use of language that is biased and undermines certain groups of learners;
- refraining from remarks that make assumptions about learner experiences;
- considering the unique needs of learners when designing learning programmes and lessons;
- constantly re-evaluating methods for teaching and assessing learners in a diverse setting;
- considering different approaches, methodologies and strategies when teaching in classrooms;
- creating opportunities for all learners to participate in activities; and

#### **5.4. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS AS CENTRAL TO LEARNER SUPPORT**

Weeks, (2006:36), has noted that:

*It is through the family that the learner first come into contact with people, acquires the characteristics attitude of the community, internalizes [sic] its customs, and so become acquainted with that specific way of life which is unique to the learners 'cultural group. Thus, parents are the most important figures in their learners 'lives-their most and important teacher.*

Parent who are not supportive of their children's education are hindering the implementation of learner support in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng Province. The school is situated in an area that is characterised by poor socio-economic status and most public schools fall into this category of poverty. Parents who happen to be the primary caregivers are poor, they work long hours trying to sustain the families at home, and they end up neglecting their duty to look after their children. They do not have time to build partnership with the school and teachers to support their children at school.

Parents were not fully involved in their children's education. Parents do not have time to assist with homework, because they will be tired as some are working long hours, where their only worry is to put food on the table at the expense of their children's education.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is therefore recommended that learner support is integral in learning and teaching of learners especially considering their diverse learning needs. Foundation Phase teachers can form partnerships with the community and during Annual General Meetings give the parents an opportunity to talk about learning support and homework and in the end, this will improve learning immensely.
- It is recommended that the SBST with the support from the stakeholders such as the DBST and SGB should collectively identify the school needs and in particular, barriers to learning at learner, teacher, curriculum and school levels.
- It is recommended that parents who cannot read and write should be given opportunity to register with Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).

## **5.5. SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES**

Several challenges which are deemed to be systemic originate within the system itself. Quite a number of education systems have learners who are in diverse classrooms.

### **5.5.1. OVERCROWDING IN CLASSROOM**

The study revealed that teachers are not able to identify some learners with exceptionalities during early screening due to the size of the classes the learners are in. It is difficult to address learner diversity by implementing curriculum differentiation. It is crucial that the DBE monitors the roll especially for the early grades, so as to ensure that there is no overcrowding that will compromise support work.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

DBE need to review South African Schools Act (SASA) and regulate admissions, by reviewing teacher-pupil ratio in the best interest of teachers and learners. If classrooms are manageable, teachers would be able to identify learners' different learning styles. DBE should construct more schools and employ more teachers especially in the foundation phase to accommodate huge numbers of learners that are overflowing in the current schools. Multi-level teaching is recommended; learners will benefit from the same concept being taught at the same time in the same class, but paying attention to their different level of understanding. During classroom observations, it was noted that it was one of the effective strategy that was used by the teachers. Considering the issue of overcrowding,

### **5.5.2. LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING (LOLT)**

*Landsberg et al.* have noted that

*Language is the chief ability that distinguishes humans from all other species on earth, it is a multidimensional and open system in which humans communicate their thoughts to others who are familiar with the*

*specific language system. It is subject to change, and new words are formulated as new concepts develop along with the changes in the environment (2016:157).*

Some teachers indicated that they can only speak English and are not conversant with the other languages that make up the twelve official languages in South Africa. This becomes a challenge, because learners come from diverse backgrounds; speaking and communicating with languages that cannot be understood by the teacher. They in turn cannot understand the language spoken by the teacher. Implementation of learner support becomes practically impossible and teachers cannot provide learning support to learners, because both teachers and learners are challenged in their spoken languages. The implication of this language barrier is that no “new words are formulated and no new concepts will develop along with the changes in the environment.” In other words, teachers are unable to identify and support learners.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following represent the recommendations in this regard:

- policy-makers must revise policies and provide opportunities for everyone in the school to understand official languages. This is important because the success of learner support depends on effective command of the medium of instruction as well as the effective responses to specific teacher and learner needs; and
- the DBE should emphasise that foundation phase learners be taught in the language that is spoken at home.



### **5.5.3. INSUFFICIENT TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

The HOD acknowledges that ongoing staff development, sharing and learning is important. There is recognition amongst foundation phase teachers that, although one may understand the theory of learner support it is only through practice and experience that skills will be enhanced. foundation phase teachers are not fully trained to deal with inclusion and learner support.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following represent the recommendations in this regard:

- professional development of teachers should be integral to school policy. Professional growth of teachers must be stimulated in order to keep up with educational demands of the diversity of the education populace.
- there is an urgent need for training and support of foundation phase teachers. Increased government funding can contribute to the empowerment of teachers through workshops run by the DBST and SBST;
- learning support teachers, psychologists, therapists and specialist teachers should be deployed in schools to assist in identifying learners who need support; and
- teachers must make a meaningful paradigm shift to ensure successful transformation. Early diagnosis and prompt remediation of barriers to learning must be in place and teachers should be trained to use learning support material.

### **5.5.4 LACK OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES**

Learning, teaching and support materials are not adequate. The fact cannot be overemphasised. Foundation phase teachers need resource to support learners effectively. DBE ought to ensure the availability of resources all the time

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the department of education:

- Develop a common material and assistive kit.
- It is recommended that the DBE through DBST facilitators, monitor, support and evaluate the need and use of assistive devices such as wheel chairs, hearing aids, typewriters prompters etc. The DBST should continuously monitor to ensure the assistive devices are functioning as required.

### **5.5.5. TEACHERS WHO ARE NOT CONVERSANT WITH POLICY**

DBE embarked on training teachers about new learner support policy but few facilitators are overwhelmed by large numbers of schools and this delays or hinders the implementation of learner support as outlined in the SIAS document Plan for 2014.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The following represent the recommendations in this regard:

- there ought to be regular visits from department of education at schools to advocate for learning support to learners; and
- intensive training designed to meet the diverse needs of learners is required for teachers.

### **5.6. LEARNER SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM**

Landsberg et. al. note that “teachers must make decisions appropriate to the level of their learners, manage and organise effectively for diverse modes of learning in the classroom” (2016:104).

This implies that the teacher should also monitor and manage the learning environment by making use of appropriate teaching styles. Teachers are central to learner support within the classroom, and particularly to minimising the impact of barriers to learning and realising the potential of all learners. Teachers who recognise diversity in the learners and their learning styles will set the tone within the classroom and will impact on learners’ diverse learning needs. Foundation Phase Teachers recognise the limitations of traditional approaches of transferring knowledge and are prepared to adopt diversification approaches. Therefore, they should be well informed and supportive of the SIAS policy.

The data indicated that teachers' excessive workload has an impact on teacher morale and the way they provide support. Policy overload and the curriculum creates additional work overload. The data revealed that teachers need more time to get to know each learners' personality and academic strengths and weakness. Time constraints due to curriculum coverage demands was singled out as another issue that make it difficult for teachers to pay attention to learner support needs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following represent the recommendations in this regard:

- It is recommended that internal factors, such as a lack of adequate resources, overcrowded classes, time constraints, language barriers, poor policy interpretation at grassroots level, weak support structures and mainly, teachers' lack of capacity should be dealt with before proper support can take place in the classrooms.

### **5.7 INADEQUATE DISTRICT SUPPORT**

However, the policy on Inclusive Education emphasises the DBST's integral part in learning support strategies. The DBST is not functional in the way it was intended. Foundation Phase teachers strongly believe in the involvement and commitment of DBST towards teachers who support learners. However, it seems SBST is not fully functional. Foundation Phase mentioned that SBST was obsolete and that makes it impossible for learner support to be successful. SBST needs to realise that teachers need full support if they are to help struggling learners in their classes as well. The key function of the SBSTs is to support all learners and teachers by identifying support needed and designing programmes to address the challenges experienced by teachers (DBE, 2001a:19). However, interviews revealed that the SBST did not fully assist learners and teachers in addressing barriers to learning, where having a functional SBST could be one strategy of enhancing the implementation of learner support.

Teachers are not assisted during admission to screen learners for proper diverse classrooms. Professionals such as linguists can assist with screening for language diversity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following represent the recommendations in this regard:

- □ It is recommended that a needs analysis be done by the DBST to gain insight into what and how to develop and support the SBST.
- It is recommended that monitoring and evaluation be strengthened at the district level.

### **5.8 CURRICULUM COVERAGE**

This study determined that a curriculum that is not flexible becomes a barrier to learning. However, the specialised form of support needed for some learners is not recognised, because of the unrealistic demands made by the curriculum. The Foundation Phase teachers are mostly required to cover the curriculum demands and support struggling learners at the same time, which was found not possible to implement. Therefore, this brings frustration, helplessness and confusion to FP teachers because too much is expected from them. Every teacher needs to understand that the most significant way to respond to learner diversity in the classroom is through the curriculum. The NCS sets the content of what is to be taught, but it is up to the teachers to plan how they will teach it to different learners in the classroom.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

continuously train teachers on:

- meaning and importance OF diversity and curriculum differentiation;
- the importance of establishment of the team that addresses the diversity through curriculum differentiation;
- and
- timeous review of curriculum and multi-level teaching and assessment.

## **5.9. LACK OF LEARNER SUPPORT SYSTEM**

UNESCO states that “A learning-friendly” environment is “child-friendly” and “teacher-friendly”. It stresses the importance of learners and teachers learning together as a learning community. It places the children in the centre of learning and encourages their active participation in learning” (Becoming an Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environment (ILFE) (2004:21 of 342)

The study found that foundation phase learners learn among classmates who come from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The learners need counselling to deal with a shock of being thrown among different learning cultures. There are no resources to make the environment learning –friendly.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following represent the recommendations in this regard:

- Foundation Phase learners should be exposed to inclusion where the school builds a culture that welcomes and celebrates differences and recognises individual needs for all. This can be done by putting inclusive values into action to promote participation (Booth and Ainscow 2011 in Landsberg, 2016:21);
- remuneration given to teachers who specialize in foundation phase and early childhood education thus helping address the issue of learner support in the early grades;
- the SBST should provide training/support to be implemented in the classroom; and with the support from the stakeholders such as the DBST and SGB.

## **5.10. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research question sought answers that responded to the objectives of the study dealing with the teaching strategies.

The data collected from the classroom observations revealed that the teachers in this study used different strategies in the implementation of learner support. Their teaching approaches were characterised by some of the following: teacher-centeredness, where

the learners assumed the role of passive recipients of the information (Makgakga, 2016:193). Furthermore, during classroom observation, it was evident that some teachers did not consider screening and identifying learners' knowledge prior to supporting. To ensure the transfer of skills after supporting, teachers could have made use of curriculum-based assessment (Landsberg, 2016:114). Learning support in the diverse classrooms as was evident in the document analysis that did not focus on supporting and developing learners according to their diversity.

### **5.11.THE RESEARCHER'S VOICE AND THEORETICAL FRAME**

The DBE notes that "The theoretical framework for learning support in inclusive education in South Africa is the pedagogy of possibility that takes into consideration barriers to learning, different intelligences and learning styles" (2002: 22).

The study was underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's bio ecological theory, the main constructs of which are multidimensional contextualist model of layers or levels of interacting systems. The analysis of the qualitative data suggests that the implementation of learner support through the lenses of the bio ecological theory was beneficial where it placed the learner in the centre of the support structure. The learner's immediate environment informs how support is replicated to and from other systems as indicated earlier.

The key element of this study was of success in which all teachers acknowledged the fact that learners who are struggling require support according to their diverse needs. The acknowledgement suggested that implementation of learner support using scarce resources, little expertise; a confined space; and lastly, a lack of teacher support; appeared to have made learner support not successful in this study. Moreover, the results in this study showed that learner support is dependent on the empowerment of teachers through curriculum development. Each teacher must be systematically empowered in curriculum development so as to optimise the teaching and learning in the classrooms (Carl, 2012; 2014). Policy makers should be able to hand down policies of curriculum statements that are implementable and flexible, whereby teachers dare not stand on the periphery and be onlookers about what is done for them, and what decision are taken on their behalf (Carl, 2012: 3). It is mandatory to create systems that are realistic for a learner

support to thrive, such as manageable classes, which will make teachers active participants in the differentiation of the curriculum. There are four main aspects in curriculum that needs to be adapted: (a) classroom environment; (b) curriculum content; (c) teaching methods; and (d) assessment strategies (Responding to Diversity in Grades R to 9 ,2017:10). The classrooms need to be conducive to learning with no overcrowding, but realistic teacher pupil ratio, curriculum content needs to be broken down to the level of learners' understanding, where teaching methods must respond to learners' learning styles that will also reflect on how assessment are strategised. Promotion of one-on-one coaching to allow learners to achieve their full potential will be eminent.

The National Curriculum Statements encourages schools to promote the use of home language as a LOLT, particularly in the early years of schooling. Therefore, central to the analysis of the data on the home language and LOLT of learners, is the degree to which learners, particularly those in the Foundation Phases, are learning in their home languages (Department of Basic Education, 2010:17).

The policy of South African school requires that Foundation Phase teachers use the learners home language as a medium of instruction. The results showed that the use of a language that a learner does not use at home in teaching early grades can negatively affect learner participation and demotivate them from engaging in fruitful learning and development. It is integral for teacher to understand the language and be understood by the learners.

The teacher who is understood by learners will gain confidence in teaching and promote learning in the classroom. It is important to enhance teacher efficacy. When learners are valued during learner support, this assists with creation of rapport between teacher and learners hence the learning environment mentioned earlier becomes healthier and accommodating.

## **5.12. CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS**

Teachers are struggling to implement learner support to struggling learners in a diverse classroom. The SBST has barely given support to teachers and some teachers have indicated that the SBST is not functional at all, it is a mere formality. Therefore, the DBE should take appropriate measures to ensure that the SBST is functional and fulfils its duties.

The study has revealed that Foundation Phase Teachers were willing to support struggling learners, it is then the DBE's call to ensure they should be empowered and their empowerment would address the diverse needs of learners in their classes.

## **5.13. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

- The researcher's focus was only on one school. Other schools in the same District may not be experiencing the same situation that has been revealed at the school in the study. Other schools might have been beneficiary of the empowerment from the DBST and the SBST, hence their Foundation Phase teachers might be executing learner support without any interruptions.
- The managers and the governors of the school were not part of the participants in the study. Had they been involved, they might have given a different perspective from those voices included here.

## **5.14. RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The admission of learners in ordinary schools without considering the medium of instruction at school *visa vis* the home language has proven detrimental to learner support. Future research may focus on:

- medium of instruction and learner support
- identifying diverse needs of struggling learners
- monitoring how teachers are utilising SIAS.



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## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDEIX A: Letter requesting permission to conduct research (GDE)**

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## **APPENDIX A: Letter requesting permission to conduct research (GDE)**

The Director  
The Provincial Department of Education  
111 Commissioner Street  
Johannesburg  
Gauteng

Dear Sir /Madam

Contact details of the person (0113551510)

Date: 14-06-2019

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Loise Marufu, am doing research under the supervision of Professor F.D. Mahlo in the Department of Inclusive Education and co-supervisor Sello William Makgakga, Doctor in the Department of Mathematics, towards an M. Ed at the University of South Africa. We have no funding to research Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

We are requesting permission to involve selected primary school in the study entitled: Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

The aim of the study is to explore foundation teachers' experience when implementing learner support in the diverse Foundation Phase Classroom. The research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District?
2. What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms?
3. How do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support?
4. What strategies can enhance learner support in Foundation Phase?

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Loise Marufu

Researcher

## APPENDIX B: GDE Research Approved letter



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/12

#### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	24 June 2019
Validity of Research Approval:	04 February 2019 – 30 September 2019 2019/102
Name of Researcher:	Marufu L
Address of Researcher:	39 Riversdale Street Coronationville Johannesburg, 2093
Telephone Number:	078 483 5192
Email address:	49022962@myunisa.ac.za
Research Topic:	Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.
Type of qualification	Masters in Education
Number and type of schools:	One Primary School and One District/ Head Office
District/s/HO	Johannesburg North

**Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

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

*F. Tshabalala* 24/06/2019  
The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

*Making education a societal priority*

**Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Te. : (011) 355 0466

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za



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

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

Kind regards



Mrs Faith Tshabalala  
Acting Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 24/06/2019

## **APPENDIX C: Letter requesting permission to conduct research (District)**

The Circuit Manager  
Johannesburg North District  
Johannesburg  
(011355000)

Date: 14-06-2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Loise Marufu, am doing research under the supervision of Professor F.D. Mahlo in the Department of Inclusive Education and co-supervisor Sello William Makgakga, Doctor in the Department of Mathematics towards a M. Ed at the University of South Africa. We have no funding to research Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

We are requesting permission to involve selected primary school in the study entitled: Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

The aim of the study is to explore foundation teachers' experience when implementing learner support in the diverse Foundation Phase Classroom. The research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District?
2. What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms?
3. How do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support?
4. What strategies can enhance learner support in Foundation Phase?

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Loise Marufu

Researcher

## **APPENDIX D: Letter requesting permission to conduct research (school)**

**Request for permission to conduct research at selected primary schools in the Johannesburg North District:**

**Title: Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.**

The Principal

..... Primary School

..... Street

Date: 14-06-2019

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Loise Marufu, am doing research under the supervision of Professor F.D. Mahlo in the Department of Inclusive Education and co-supervisor Sello William Makgakga, Doctor in the Department of Mathematics towards an M. Ed at the University of South Africa. We have no funding to research Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

We are requesting permission to involve selected primary school in the study entitled: Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

The aim of the study is to explore foundation teachers' experience when implementing learner support in the diverse Foundation Phase Classroom. The research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District?
2. What are Foundation Phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in diverse classrooms?
3. How do Foundation Phase teachers provide learning support?
4. What strategies can enhance learner support in Foundation Phase?

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Loise Marufu

Researcher

## **APPENDIX E: Consent letter for participation**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY**

Date: 14-06-2019

Title: **Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.**

### **DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT/ Foundation Phase Teacher**

My name is Loise Marufu I am doing research under the supervision of Francina. Dikeledi Mahlo, a Professor in the Department of Inclusive Education and co-supervisor Sello William Makgakga, Doctor in the Department of Mathematics towards an M. Ed degree at the University of South Africa. We have no funding.

We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: **Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.**

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY? / WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

This study is expected to collect important information that could yield further strategies in learner support. Findings from this study might help teachers to understand learner support as it is implemented in schools with learners from diverse backgrounds. Learners who are supported correctly at the Foundation Level will be literate and numerate hence they will be able to make informed decision.

### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**



You are invited to participate because Learner support will help teachers and learners to understand each other in their social, academic and economic context. Based on what participants said some interventions or strategies could be developed and documented by policy makers thereby adding knowledge on learner support in South African schools.

I obtained your contact details from the School Principal.

Foundation Phase grades that will participate in this study include Grade R to Grade three classes, 1 Foundation Phase Head of Department (HOD), 1 school principal, 1 School Governing Board (SGB) chairperson, 1 School Based Support (SBST) facilitator, and 1 District Based Support Team (DBST) facilitator.

**WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study involves semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. Interview Schedule are for Foundation Phase Teachers/HOD, Principal, Deputy Principal, SBST, DBST and SGB chairperson.

**CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There are no any negative consequences that are anticipated if you take part in this study because no vulnerable adults will be involved, and no sensitive information will be divulged.

**WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research **OR** Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?** Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval. The information will be destroyed by shredding all notes taken during the research as well as destroying any audio tapes after a period of five years.

**WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

You will receive no payment or any form of tokens for participating in this study.

**HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

**HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Loise Marufu on +2784635192 or email [49022962@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:49022962@mylife.unisa.ac.za). The findings are accessible for five years.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact +2784635192/email: [49022962@mylife.unisa.ac.za?](mailto:49022962@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Francina. Dikeledi. Mahlo on: 0124812756/ [mahlofd@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mahlofd@unisa.ac.za) OR/Sello William Makgakga on: 0124294293/[makgasw@unisa.ac.za](mailto:makgasw@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you,  
Loise Marufu  
Researcher

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty  
I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications  
and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise  
specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name and Surname \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature Date

Researcher's Name and Surname LOISE MARUFU

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature Date

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact  
Francina. Dikeledi. Mahlo on :0124812756/ [mahlofd@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mahlofd@unisa.ac.za)OR/Sello William Makgakga  
on:0124294293/[makgasw@unisa.ac.za](mailto:makgasw@unisa.ac.za)

## APPENDIX F: Interview schedule for teachers

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Researcher:** Marufu Loise

**Title:** Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

**Supervisor:** Professor D. Mahlo

**Co-supervisor:** Doctor S. Makgakga

#### Interview

Participant.....

Researcher.....

The interview schedules were used to ask questions that required the participants to formulate their views in their own words.

#### Questions:

1. What do you think can be proper learning support for struggling learners in the diverse classroom? Why?

2. What kind of support do you get from your school?

3. How can you explain your classroom environment in general?

4. How do you establish a culture of learning in your classroom?

5. How do you engage your learners during teaching and learning?

1.What are your experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in the diverse classroom?

2.How do you provide learner support in the Foundation Phase classroom?

3.What activities do you use to enhance learner support in the Foundation Phase classroom?

#### ORIGINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULES FOR FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS.

1. How do you feel about/cope with the teaching of Foundation Phase learners in diverse classroom?
2. Are there any challenges (if any) that you face when teaching these learners? If yes, what are they?
3. What do you think can be the causes of those challenges?

During investigation the first two questions were rephrased as follows:

1. Do you get support from the school on how to provide remedial support?
2. What kind of support do you get from your school?
3. How can you explain your classroom environment in general?  
(The kind of data that will be drawn from this question is about the overcrowded environment.)
4. How do you establish a culture of learning in your classroom?  
(To draw attention to the diverse nature of learners and their learner support needs.)
5. How do you engage your learners during teaching and learning?  
(To draw data about different learning styles.)

The HOD, was asked the following questions:

1. How do you understand inclusive education?
2. When was inclusive education implemented in your schools?
3. How did you implement it; did you receive training prior to its implementation?
4. Do you have the necessary resources to implement inclusive education?
5. What is your understanding of the term “learner support” in terms of learners with learning difficulties in a diverse Foundation Phase classroom?

6. Do you feel current Foundation Phase learner support is adequate to assist struggling learners?
7. How do you relate your training in relationship with learner support?
8. What challenges do you experience in facilitating/coordinating/ managing or supervising Foundation Phase learner support?
9. In what ways can learner support be improved to adequately support learners with learning difficulties?
10. Do you have any input you would like to share with the researcher on this issue?

## **APPENDIX G: Observation schedule for teachers**

### **Observation template**

**Title: Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.**

RESEARCHER: Loise Marufu

SUPERVISOR: Prof. F. D. Mahlo      CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr. S. W. Makgaka

Participant	Grade	Date and Time	Items to Observe	Observations	Reflection
			<p>1. How support is done – that is, whether inclusion or exclusion is methods in which the curriculum is instructed by teachers for the benefit of struggling learners.</p> <p>2. The way teaching resources are applied to provide learning to learners in need of learning support.</p> <p>3. The verbal interaction among Foundation Phase teachers and learners with diverse learning support needs, for example when they pay attention to learners' learning styles during lessons.</p> <p>4. The non-verbal interaction among Foundation Phase teachers and learners with learning support needs, for example the way they use non-verbal means to involve learners with exceptional personalities.</p>		



**APPENDIX: H Reading Lesson observation framework [RLOF]**

The Reading Lesson Observation Framework

Teacher: Ronika/Beritha/Anna (pseudonyms) Observer: Loise Marufu

School year: 2019

Date observed

Observation occurred: Before reading: **During reading**: After reading

Lesson preparations		O	C	R	N

Teaching methods and style		O	C	R	N

Classroom Interactions		O	C	R	N

Teacher-learner interaction		O	C	R	N

Learner-learner interaction		O	C	R	N

Teaching and		O	C	R	N

learning resources					

Classroom Assessment		O	C	R	N

## **APPENDIX I: Sample of interviews questions for teachers**

LM: Good afternoon, my name is Loise Marufu.

I am a student from the University of South Africa I want to ask you some questions about learner support and diversity.

The topic of my thesis is: Foundation Phase Teachers' experiences in implementing learner support in Johannesburg North District.

Please relax and feel at ease and be informed that I am not here to judge you, it is merely an effort to gather information that will help teachers be more comfortable when rendering learner support in diverse classrooms.

### **QUESTIONS asked of Teacher Ronika (pseudonym)**

LM: What are your experiences in supporting learners in a diverse foundation phase Classroom?

LM: What strategy do you put in place?

LM: Do you have any documents that you use when you are using any strategy to deal with challenges?

LM: What do you say about curriculum coverage?

LM: How do you feel about teaching of Foundation Phase learners in a diverse class?

LM: You are looking at the DoE to come down to support the teacher in the classroom?

LM: How do you provide support to foundation phase learners in a diverse classroom?

LM: Can you please elaborate on reading, because some learners cannot read because they don't have the knowledge of the basic sounds; they might be they are dyslexic?

LM: Do teachers have enough LTSM? And you in your class, do you have enough teaching materials?

LM: Why did they mix learners?

LM: As a Foundation Phase teachers teaching in diverse classroom, what strategy do you put in place for your class, say when we look at diversity, what strategy do you put in place? Say when we look at different learning styles?

LM: What do you say about curriculum differentiation?

LM: What is your opinion about the flexibility of the curriculum?

LM: How do feel about teaching Foundation Phase learners in a diverse classroom?

LM: In what other ways you feel that it would be better for some children to work practically?

LM: Are there any challenge you face when teaching learners from diverse background?

LM: What do you think are the causes of challenges that you encounter in your classroom?

LM: Having this diversity, how do you establish a culture of learning in your classroom?

LM: Are parents involved in their children's education?

LM: So in other words you feel that parents must come on board?

LM: Are you saying the LoLT is different?

LM: In other words, there are classroom rules and routines are in place?

LM: In other words, the parents as a primary care givers are not there?

LM: How do you engage your learners in the classroom?

LM: What do you think are the cause of challenges?

LM: Do you cultivate a culture of learning in your classroom?

LM: How do you engage learners in your classroom?

### **QUESTIONS asked Teacher Beritha (pseudonym)**

LM: How do you cope with the teaching of diverse learners in a Foundation Phase classroom?

LM: How do you feel when teaching these diverse learners?

LM: Do you face any challenges when you call parents to school?

LM: Do you get support from the school?

LM: What can you say about your classroom environment?

LM: How do you establish a culture of learning in your environment?

LM: In other words, you are saying it is very difficult to support learners in an overcrowded environment?

LM: How do you engage learners during teaching and learning?

### **QUESTIONS asked of Teacher Anna (pseudonym)**

LM: What are your experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in a diverse classroom?

LM: In other ways you say the diverse is so varsity, what would your suggestions according to the diversity be?

LM: Have you had some training prior to learner support?

LM: What do you say about the learning support you receive from your school?

LM: What are your challenges?

LM: Tell me about any training you have had training prior to implementation of learner support?

LM: How have you been receiving support from the DBST and SBST?

LM: How do you provide support in your classroom, do you have perhaps have strategy you put in place?

LM: Do you have a structure of SBST in your school?

LM: What strategy do you use when teaching English?

LM: When it comes to Mathematics what activities do you use to support struggling learners?

LM: How can you explain your classroom environment in general, is it a conducive environment?

LM: Are you coping with the supporting learners in a diverse classroom?

LM: Are there any challenges?

LM: Are there any remedial teachers?

LM: What do you think are the causes of the challenges??

LM: Do learners understand the LoLT?

LM: Do you have any support structure at your school?

LM: Do you perhaps have any challenges when using the LoLT?

LM: What can you say about DBST and SBST do you receive any support from them?

LM: How do you provide learner support in your classroom?

LM: Do you have strategy that you put in place?

LM: Do you have a structure of SBST at your school?

LM: What activities do you put in place to alleviate any challenges you come across in rendering learner support?

LM: Are you also looking at their different learning styles?

LM: When it comes to mathematics what are strategies do you use?

LM: How can you explain your classroom environment in general?

LM: Is your classroom environment conducive?

LM: Do you feel that you are coping?

LM: Are there any challenges if any when you are helping the struggling learners?

LM: Do they understand the language of teaching and learning?

LM: What do you think is the cause of this challenge?

LM: Despite not having a functional SBST, are there any problems that you encounter?

LM: How do you engage your learners during teaching and learning?

### **QUESTIONS that were asked the HOD of the FP**

LM: Do have any experience in inclusive education? Where you trained to teach Foundation Phase?

LM: How many FP classes do you have in your phase?

LM: How do you understand inclusive education?

LM: What is your understanding of inclusive education?

LM: Have you been exposed to classrooms where you have diversity in classrooms?

LM: How do you deal with this differences diversity?

LM: How do you develop your teachers?

LM: Do you have any idea when inclusive education was introduced in your school?

LM: Do you have the necessary resources to implement learner support?

LM: What is your understanding of learner support in a classroom where you have learners with diverse needs?

LM: Can you please elaborate?

LM: Do you feel current learner support is adequate to deal with learner support?

LM: How do you relate your training to learner support?



LM: What challenges if any do you experience when coordinating or managing or supervising learner support in a classroom?

LM: In what ways can learner support can be improved in order to adequately support learners with diverse learning needs?

LM: Are you suggesting that learners who are struggling must be separated from the rest of the class?

LM: What will happen then to our inclusive education? Because if we separate them, remember the whole idea is to have these children in one class, so if we separate them what will happen?

LM: What do you think is the problem is in implementing learner support?

LM: Do you as the HOD have any input that you would like to share with researcher?

LM: Are you suggesting that parents must be brought on board in order to assist with learner support?

LM: What type of learners are you referring to? Please elaborate.

## APPENDIX J: Sample of interviews for teachers

Below is an illustration of Participant A's verbatim responses to the interview questions.

**LM:** What are your experiences in supporting learners in a diverse classroom?

### Participant A

*In the first place, we have to start with the curriculum, the curriculum is too varsity; you cannot get back to basics, you cannot do your support the way you should do. In the second place the remedial classes were taken away, you are working with some children, not all... there are a few really that is earmarked for the remedial classes and... we started with support many years ago, when we were working teaching in groups the three RS reading writing and arithmetic. When inclusion was introduced, no education was introduced. No education of teachers took place: they presume that you can do remedial. No support was given from the district demands were made from District level, from District ... from National to the District level you need to support the teacher - you need support! How can a teacher that does not have remedial background support a learner? Some children are helped in groups, when you can do your support right, but nowadays classes are too big in the first place. The curriculum becomes a challenge, because for me, it looks like there is more quantity than quality. Curriculum is a major thing and they demand curriculum coverage. You have to remember not all children are at same level, especially with common exams. With the Grade Threes inclusion is preached for you from the morning until in the afternoon, but then the Department comes with the common exams inclusion is that you have to adapt the work for inclusion; but the problem is, once they write common exams, you get LSN number for the child; but they write the same exam, they get ANA longer extension of time to write. There is no diversity from the Department itself. It happened with the ANA question papers and it is happening, now is common papers they don't make provision for the children that can't; they are still on the basics. My major problem is teachers, even at district level they didn't get, there is no support. I was teaching*

curriculum. It was stated by teacher, that the CAPS is too varsity for the little ones to handle.

**LM:** How do you provide support to foundation phase learners in a diverse classroom?

Teacher A

I really don't, you know, with some children, with the necessary support it helps them a lot. But then you get children the kind of learner that work with their hands only, it would be better for some children to work practically on their own in their own classroom, should have more diverse subject. Where do you find space and time? Give the teachers teaching assistance!

**LM:** What strategy do you put in place for your class?

Teacher A

Different strategies I think the children that are in need of support needs to work more practically which takes longer. And that again, that comes down to the quantity of work that is expected from me ... I can't. Curriculum coverage ...how can you expect curriculum coverage? But not taking into consideration the children that is struggling, because you have to put in different strategies even with phonic sound cards, they need to learn how to build words. They need to learn how to write sentences. If you sit with them, so how do you expect curriculum coverage for the whole class if you sit with diverse learners who are, that is some are in need of support? It doesn't make sense!

**LM:** What do you say about curriculum differentiation?

**Participant: A**

They defend the curriculum differentiation, that is, where the caps document is lacking. It doesn't give you the difference of that differentiation. Am I talking nonsense? How can you expect curriculum coverage for the child that is in support? And then the dept. comes in they don't want to see children failing being retained, who knows who works on the ground the teacher or the district and

*national so how can national and the district tells me this child is allowed to go and this child is not allowed to go, because they are looking at 2 or 3 chin per grade. If that child can't, then the teacher is at fault. She is responsible! I am not responsible!*

**LM:** *How do you feel about teaching of learners in a diverse class?*

**Participant: A**

*I really don't, you know with some children, with the necessary support it helps them a lot. But then you get children the kind of learner that work with their hands only. It would be better for some children to work practically on their own in their own classroom should have more diverse subject where do you find space and space [TME SPACE] give the teachers teaching assistance [Teachers are overwhelmed].*

**LM:** *What Challenges Do You Face?*

**Teacher A**

*There is a lot of challenges: if you look at the background of our learners it's a low social economic status. Education takes place, even manners are taking place at school. Parental involvement is next to nothing, but nothing is happening at home. We are sitting with another groups of children, their mind is to put food on the table. you know what? I look at education as a triangle: the educator the child and the parent we have to work together to create a child that will be able to fulfil his position in life in as a citizen of South Africa, but here it is basically the teacher and some of the children.*

**LM:** *What do you think are the cause of the challenges?*

*Socio-economic, you know what? You cannot compare apples and pears. You cannot compare apple and pears. There are two different fruits. You cannot compare schools like us in Extention to the northern suburbs, to Northcliff Primary, to Randburg Primary; because they are so diverse, and unfortunately CAPS is causing this problem, because they are not catering*

*for this diversity. And again, you know what our Home Language, at school language of learning and teaching is English, the children are talking a slang they are not talking fully English they have got their own words, they still talk about 'five bob', if you talk about 'five bob' then they know its fifty cents. They don't know what is audience.*

**LM:** Do you establish a culture of learning?

*I am very strict. They are classroom rules, routines. I have to force respect your respect on them unfortunately with our culture of children we have to force respect. I would say 20% of parents are involved the parents are not involved remember also here in our area children are having children, became parents. They don't finish their high school, so how can they help children with homework they are not even adults they have no qualification.*

Below is an illustration Participant B's responses to the interview questions.

**LM:** How do you cope with the teaching of diverse learners in a foundation phase classroom?

Teacher B

*What is the meaning of this diverse? It is sometimes strenuous because most of the children who are having learning problems, you find that at home the background itself is the one which lead them to that situation, in the classroom their performances sometimes its dragged by the home, or by whatever situation they are coming from; so sometimes you find it's not easy to move on with those who you know maybe doing well. You have to attend to these children you have to even find out what is the cause of everything which is happening in the classroom. Finding that it's the background from home and so you have some times to call parents in order to find more about the situation of the child; what makes that child; everything which is happening in the classroom; finding that it's the background from home, and so you have some times to call parents in order to find more about the situation of the child what makes that child not to perform well or his the behaviour itself.*

**LM:** What strategy do you put in place for your class?

Teacher B

*my classroom is overcrowded... and sometimes you neglect them. The learning area will direct me if we are doing reading or listening and speaking, those children will have to draw or write.*

LM: *Do you face any challenges when you call parents?*

Teacher B

*Some of the parent doesn't support, but most of them are supportive. They come to school, some doesn't even agree if you can tell them 'hey your child is doing this is not behaving well like this, is not doing the work, you will just say, 'ah that child is doing very well at home, when I give him something to do he is doing well finding that it differs with that you are saying' [defensive parents].*

LM: What do you think are the causes of the challenges?

*Teacher B: if the class is overcrowded, it's not easy to run with the curriculum or to reach what you wanted to reach at the end.*

LM: *Do you get support from the school?*

Teacher B: *Uh, the school is supporting us.*

Researcher: In what way?

Teacher B:

*Sometimes if you go and report, maybe you are having a problem in the classroom and you go and report to the management team sometimes they, they give you encouragement and sometimes to call a parent in order to find out maybe you are having a problem with apparent they will intervene and you know eh help to resolve the problem.*

LM: *What can you say about your classroom environment?*

Teacher B

*My classroom is overcrowded... and sometimes you neglect them.* Teacher B seems to be hesitating, or not sure to tell the truth of the situation of her classroom environment; thus, likely the reason she took a long time before answering, she just smiled at the Researcher and continually say “um, um”. At the end. she finally opened up and categorically stated that it is very, very difficult to give support in an overcrowded classroom. And she also commented that *“at the end of the day you sometimes neglect them.”* This comment indicates that the class size impact negatively on learner support. Teachers are in dire need of support, if they are left on their own with big classes, then learners won’t be supported enough. Teacher A also commented about big classes and overwhelming of work and she gave a call out for *“assistance teachers.”*

*Teacher B*

*Oh, ah most of the time, I am giving, some I am just giving them something to draw ah... answering of questions, and you know, moving with, eh, maybe it will depend on the learning area, the learning area will direct me. If we are doing, let’s say, we are reading or listening and speaking, those children will have to answer question: sometimes draw and dramatise.*

*Teacher B*

*Um, my classroom is overcrowded, because if the children are not performing [hesitating] the performance are not the same. This means that you have to attend these children. More especial the lower primary children individually, so if the class is overcrowded, it’s not easy what you to reach at the end of the day you sometimes neglect them [neglect of leaners]. [It is very difficult to give support in an overcrowded classroom.]*

LM: How do you establish a culture of learning in your classroom? environment?

*Teacher B*

*Oh, ah, most of the time I am giving, some I am just giving them something to draw ah... answering of questions and you know moving with eh maybe it will depend on the learning*

area the learning area will direct me if we are doing let's say we are reading or listening and speaking those children will have to answer question sometimes draw and dramatise

LM: how do you engage learners during teaching and learning?

Teacher B

Ah, asking questions, question and answer methods; they will have to answer the questions; they will have to draw if it is drawing; they will do, let's say, its handwriting, they will have to copy what I taught them; they will have colour draw and maybe if needs dramatise and singing and whatever; they will have to do that, or counting. It depends on the area are I give [drawing attention to learners' different learning styles].

Below is an illustration of Participant C's responses to the interview questions.

LM: What are your experiences in supporting learners with learning difficulties in a diverse classroom?

Participant C:

My experience is that the, eh, it is very difficult to support, because the diversity is so vast. And I have not been trained in how to handle the diversity. I found that the language barriers, I speak within my class I have four different languages at the moment so it is very difficult to do it.

My experience is that the, eh, it is very difficult to support, because the diversity is so vast. And I have not been trained in how to handle the diversity. I found that the language barriers, I speak within my class I have four different languages at the moment so it is very difficult to do it.

Do you need assistance or do you need the classes to be put according to their diversity?

Participant C: I think I would do a very good job but at the moment the class size are hindering.



Participant C thinks that teachers don't know how to support learners because they are not receiving support since they did not have training in inclusive education and how they should render learner support.

LM: In other ways you say the diverse is so varsity, what would be your suggestions according to the diversity?

Participant C: *no the classrooms are just too big if the classes were smaller, with my experience.*

LM: And can you tell me about training, have you had some training prior to teaching in the foundation phase training concerning learner support?

Participant C: *No, I have not. It's just my experience carries me through, because I have been teaching for so many years, so my experience and the old method of teaching learners helps me a bit, but I have no support in terms of learners with barriers.*

LM: and when we look, are these learners with barriers normally when you are supporting learners you give learners learning material what do you about LTSM you that you are receiving from your school?

Participant C: *I have sufficient, and if I doesn't I make my own because I find learners with barriers need a lot of concrete apparatus, and I have it in my classroom, so I make good use of concrete apparatus.*

LM: how do you support your learners?

Participant C: *So I identify learners that have the barriers and I plan according to my own personal strategies. Yes, I do, in terms of phonics, I use concrete shapes that show the pictures single sounds that I have. Eh, in Maths, I use a lot of concrete apparatus as well in reading I do the old ways were I break up the sentences into words and they match the words, it seems to be working for now with children that are not bad.*

LM: In when we move on to the challenges do you have any challenges? or since you have that varsity experience you are finding your way through.

Participant C: *My challenges are: that the classrooms sizes are way too big and another challenge is that I am not qualified to identify the learning barriers that the child has I am just feeling my way [so there is lack of qualification and big classes].*

LM: how have you been receiving support from dbst/sbst?

Participant C: *I receive absolutely no support and there is no viable means of getting in touch with them, so we just go on at our own rate doing our own thing [unavailability of facilitators].*

LM: How do you provide learner support in your classroom?

Participant C: *So I identify learners that have the barriers and I plan according to my own personal strategies.*

LM: Do you perhaps have like strategies that you put in place?

Teacher C

*I give them easier activities. I am a Grade 2 teacher, so I get Grade R activities. I go basically right back to the foundation just to make the concept easier. Yes, I see it I see it in the children were it is possible to see but some of the learning barriers are so complex I can't identify them because I don't have the qualification. I find that a lot of kids that have learning barrier don't have the ability to write so we do everything in concrete and then answer in oral orally.*

Participant C: *Yes, I do, in terms of phonics, I use concrete shapes that show the pictures single sounds that I have. Eh in Maths, I use a lot of concrete apparatus as well in reading. I does the old ways, where I breaks up the sentences into words and they match the words, it seems to be working for now with children that are not bad.*

LM: Do you have a structure of an SBST?

Participant C: *Yes, on paper it is there.*

LM: What activities do you use to enhance learner support when you are teaching English?

Participant C: *I give them easier activities. I am a Grade 2 teacher, so I get Grade R activities I go basically right back to the foundation just to make the concept easier.*

LM: Are you also looking into the children's learning styles?

Participant C: *Yes, I see it I see it in the children were it is possible to see, but some of the learning barriers are so complex, I am, ...can't identify them... because I don't have the qualification.*

LM: How do you explain your classroom environment?

Participant C: *It's very conducive to learning in education. It's fine, just the classroom size is too big, and there is no space for us to move to the children with learning barrier in a corner to help them and teach them. I basically have to do it when other learners are gone home.*

LM: Do you feel that you are coping in a diverse classroom?

Participant C: *No, why is that no... back to training.*

LM: Are there any challenges that you face when teaching in a diverse classroom?

Participant C: *Yes, they are because the children are so weak that even though I am giving easier activities they still not progressing.*

LM: by saying weak what do you mean, in terms of the language of teaching and learning, in terms of the concept that you are, where is it exactly?

Participant C: *in terms of the learning barrier.*

LM: Do they understand your LoLT?

Teacher C:

*Yes, some I am saying some do and no some don't, because they are so many so the ones I deal with. I literally put them in different groups in terms of how to support them in terms of language, so I make it through to the ones that have learning barrier and they speak English. But the Afrikaans and the vernacular languages I am not getting through and I can't because I can only speak English.*

Researcher: Do you receive support from the School/SBST?

Teacher C: *I receive absolutely no support and there is no viable means of getting in touch with them so we just go on at our own rate doing our own thing.*

LM: are there any challenges that you face when teaching in a diverse classroom?

Participant C: *Yes, they are because the children are so weak that even though I am giving easier activities they still not progressing.*

LM: By saying weak what do you mean, in terms of the language of teaching and learning, in terms of the concept that you are, where is it exactly?

Participant C: *In terms of the learning barrier.*

LM: Do you have any challenges?

Participant C: *My challenges are: that the class sizes are way too big and another challenge is that I am not qualified to identify the learning barriers that the child has I am*

*just feeling my way. Yes, they are, because the children are so weak that even though I am giving easier activities they are still not progressing.*

LM: What do you think are the cause of the challenges?

Participant C: *The diversity of the class and the lack of my training so I am also hindering them because I haven't been trained. [the teacher becomes a barrier to support]*

LM: How do you establish a culture of learning?

Participant C: *To draw attention to the diverse nature of learners and their learner support needs.*

LM: How do you engage your learners during teaching and learning?

Participant C: *By doing different learning styles oral lesson verbal lesson practically.*

### **Interview questions that were asked the HOD of the foundation phase.**

The questions were meant to find out how learner support was being administered in her phase. Considering that the HOD of the foundation phase was responsible for monitoring and mentoring teachers in the phase, more than five questions were asked with additional probing questions where necessary: see Appendix H.

Researcher:

Where you trained to teach inclusive education?

Participant D:

*I am not trained, but as a Foundation Phase teacher, you come across those things in everyday teaching.*

supposed to be capable peers are not empowered, this is a loop hole in the education system, it creates learning barriers on its own.

Researcher:

What is your understanding of inclusive education?

Participant D:

*My understanding is that in the mainstream as we are a school we are having some children who are coming across learning difficulties so those children who are coming across those difficulties, so those children we don't put them aside, we include them in our day-to-day teaching but having some strategies to address their challenges as a whole in that one lesson that I am preparing my children.*

Researcher:

Have you been exposed to classroom where you have diversity? in classrooms?...

Participant D:

*Mm... all learners are not the same. They are different, they are treated as individuals, so that is diversity; because they are having different learning pace different abilities they are different all in all different background, different way of learning.*

Researcher:

So how do you deal with this difference, let's say, when you are giving learner support or when you are assisting teachers since you are the HoD? Do you have, like, workshops where you sit with your teachers and helping them understand the diversity that they are facing in the classrooms?

Participant D:

*Yah, we are giving them professional learning, we having professional learning committees, where we are developing our learners [teachers] to understand the differences of our learners in the classes and how to treat them different as they are to carter for their needs in one lesson we got three types of learners in a classroom; the fast learners, moderate, and slow learners; all these learners must be catered to in one lesson, and at the end of the day, these three groups must be taught and must gain some knowledge or skills or values out of the lesson.*

Researcher:

How do you deal with diversity? Do you have workshops where you make teachers understand diversity?

Participant D:

*Yah, we are giving them professional learning, we having professional learning committees, where we are developing our learners[teachers] to understand the differences of our learners in the classes and how to treat them different as they are to carter for their needs in one lesson. We got three types of learners in a classroom: the fast learners, moderate, and slow learners; all these learners must be catered in one lesson and at the end of the day these three groups must be taught and must gain some knowledge or skills or values out of the lesson.*

Researcher:

Do you have any idea when inclusive education was implemented in your school?

Participant D: No.

Researcher:

But have you ever heard someone talking about inclusive education?

Participant D:

*When I got out of college they told us that were you are you are going to face the real situation; where you are going to see different type of learners were you have to use different type of approach, so we know that in a real situation like a school day, one when you start, you must know that you are going to carter for all these children and this is called inclusive education.*

Researcher:

Do you have the necessary resources to implement inclusive necessary resources to implement inclusive education in your school?

Participant D:

*Resources we don't have at all. Because they are those learners who depend on sight those ones who want to touch and taste and uses the senses, so that we don't have we are limited in terms of resource.*

*We don't have, we are limited in terms of resource.*

Researcher:

What is your understanding of learner support in terms of learners with learning difficulties in a diverse foundation classroom?

Participant D:

*Eh, my understanding about learner support is that there are learners who will depend on teachers for support to assist them the word support means assisted and then these learners must be supported so that we get that goal; that they must know this type of knowledge or they must gain this type of skills at the end so learner support means the teacher must be there for them to make sure that they attain their goals.*

Researcher:

Can you please elaborate? if you "must be there for them..."

Participant D:



*The teacher must show them how things are done guiding them if they need to write you show them how to write how to do things exactly.*

Researcher:

Is your learner support in this phase adequate to assist struggling learners?

Participant D:

*I don't think it is adequate, because when I look at how different the learners are in our school situation, we are limited in terms of resources we don't have the audio the visuals we only have the charts, its visual, neh? And kinetics, were they have to touch and taste, and I feel we don't have such things; the resources are limiting us.*

Researcher:

How do you relate your training in relationship with as a junior primary teacher to learner support?

Participant D:

*Its related because when we were taught in the college or in university, I, we were taught of theory and then we used to go out and encounter what we were reading in the book and then relate the two things that theory and what the practical, or the real part of it this is how things must be done.*

Researcher:

What challenges if any do you experience in coordinating or managing /supervising Foundation Phase learner support in diverse classrooms?

Participant D:

*Mm, hey, but so far, so good, because this we had that mentality that if you start when supporting a learner, it means this learner is put aside we are going to fail this learner. But now we have this mentality of supporting this child in order to get them somewhere, so I don't see it as a challenge*

*anymore, because our mind set has changed, and we understand that the aim of support is to get these children out of this mercy to somewhere else.*

Researcher:

In what ways can learner support be improved to adequately support learners with learning? In your own point of view what way do you think learner support can be improved?

Participant D:

*I think we can get a specialist, somebody who has been specialised in this particular field who understand better psychologically, because really sometimes we get frustrated as teachers we don't understand, we want them to be the same, because they are taught with one teacher in the same class, they are of the same age, you know, so that's were I think if somebody who has been well-trained coming to our rescue, and take these particular children aside, and we left with these children that we think they are moderate and fast; the slow learners be treated as special case.*

Researcher:

Ok, so you are suggesting that the learners who are struggling must be separated? What will happen to our inclusive education if we separate, because if we separate them, remember the whole idea is to have these children in one class?

Participant D:

*If we don't separate them, I think we need intensive training then as teachers... the way we are going to be trained and understand the learners their nature... and what and all that pertaining to these children then we will still continue with this inclusive education.*

Researcher:

and another thing, what do you think is the problem as far as the implementing of learner support?

Participant D:

*Oh ok, I understand. It is our class size is very big, so we don't have individual attention.*

Researcher:

You as the HOD do you have any input that you would like to share with the researcher on this issue?

Participant D:

*I just want to say Inclusive Education is a very good thing but with the type of children we are having?*

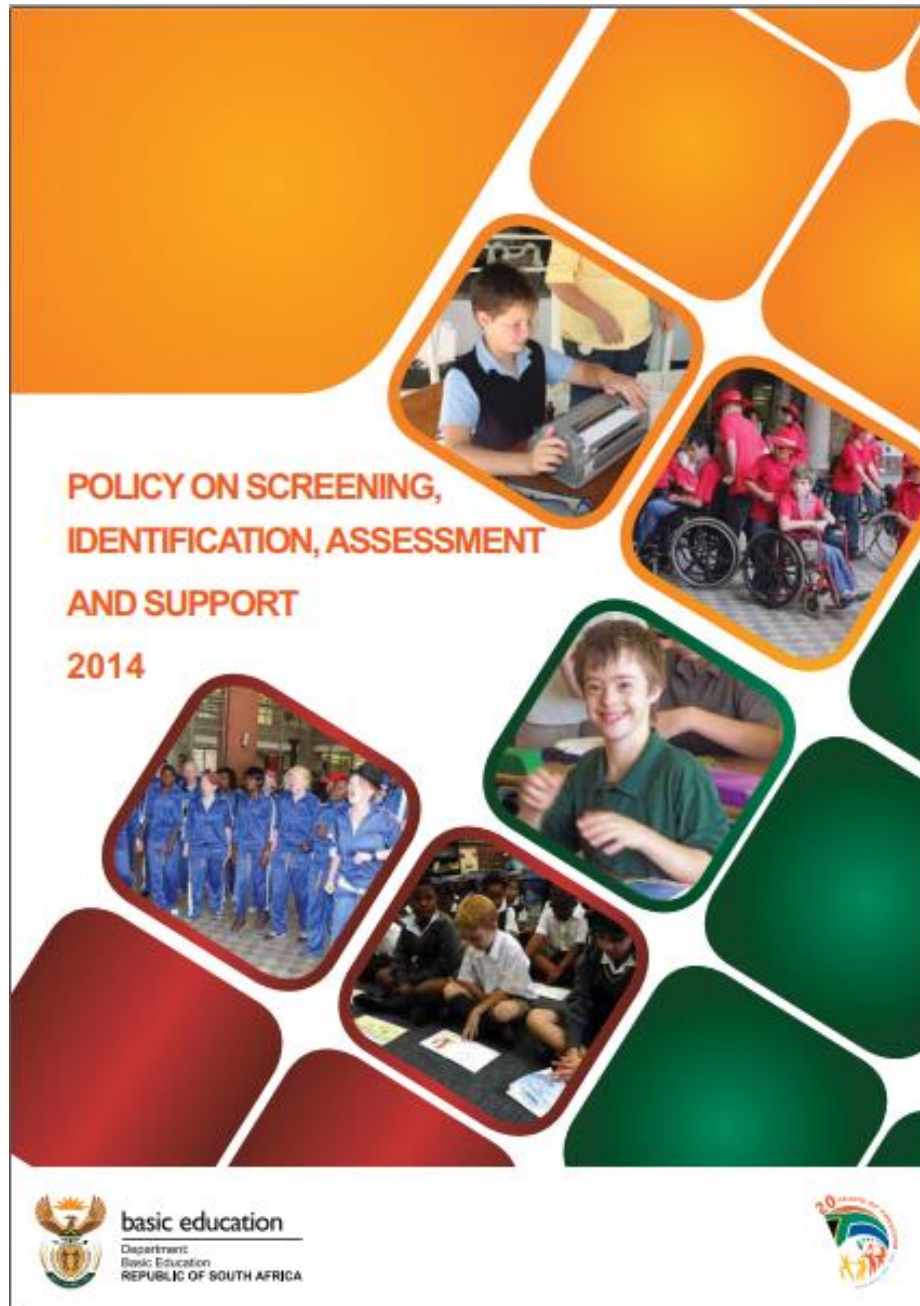
Researcher:

When you say "type" please elaborate what exactly are you referring to?

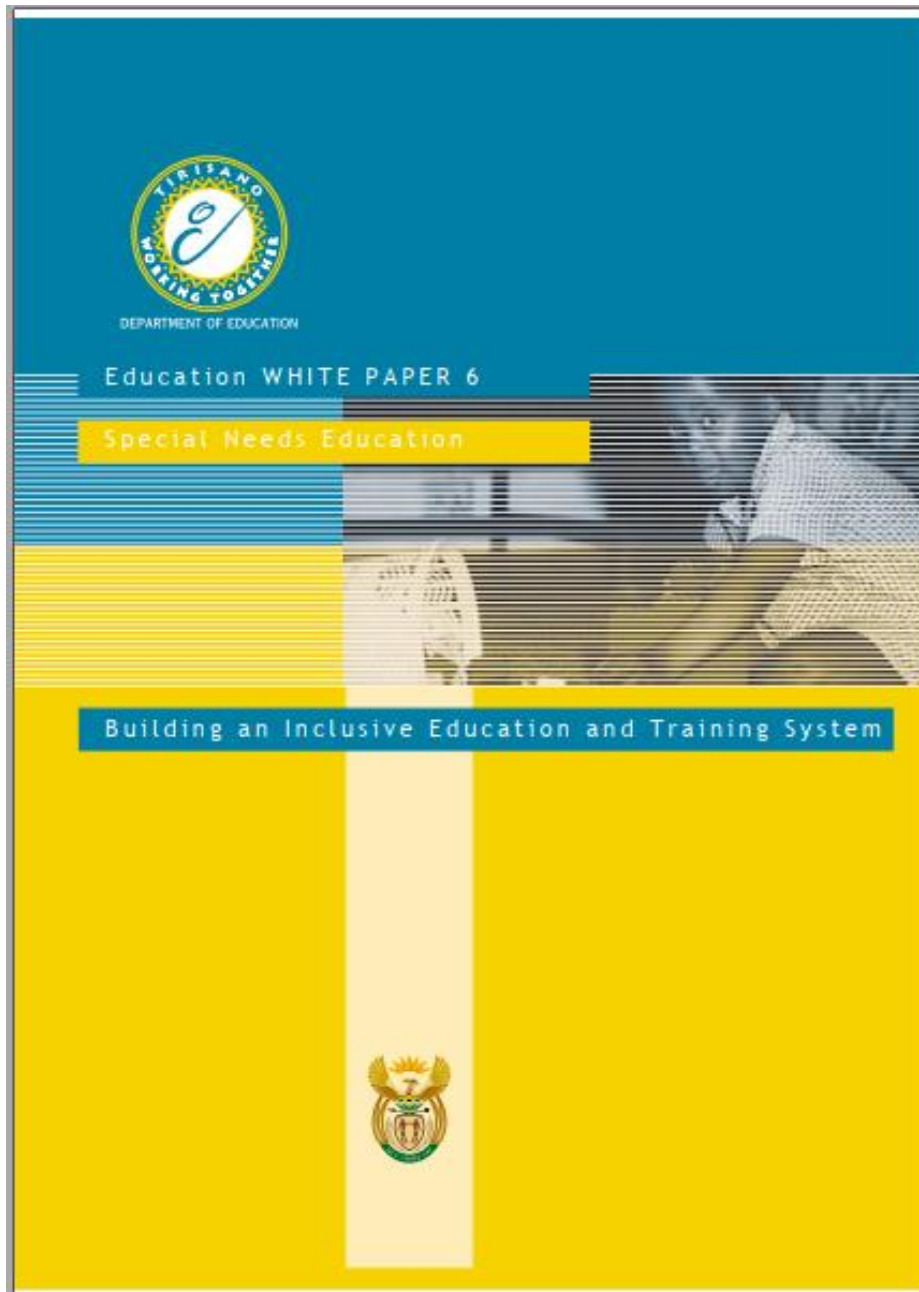
Participant D:

*The learners who are... even the social economic background is affecting us there were the parents doesn't care about whatever we are sending learners with to assist at home, because when you teach in the class you are window dressing and then you want to extend that so that learners can understand what you were teaching in form of homework so the homework is where we reinforce but then you find out that the home work is not done.*

## **APPENDIX K: Samples of Policy documents used to analyse teachers' documents**



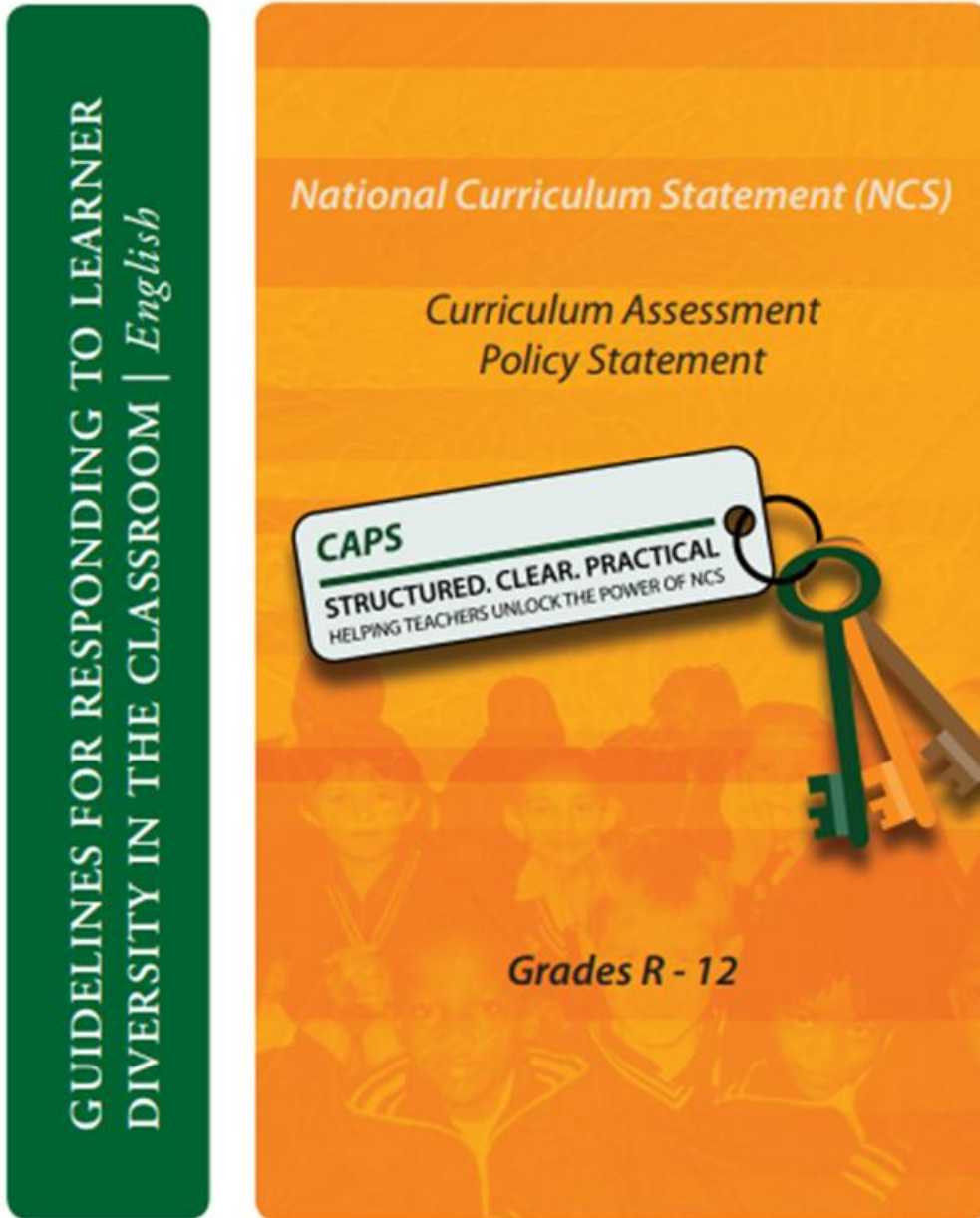
*During the time of conducting this research, teachers in the Foundation Phase were yet to learn about the Policy of SIAS and that is also the reason Rubi [pseudonym], a DBST facilitator was invited to the school during the month of September 2019, so that she could empower teachers on how to support learners paying attention to their diversity.*



*The EWP6 categorically states that all children can learn with support. The philosophy of inclusion that is the anchor which informs all support was not recognised by the teachers as they were rendering learner support.*

*CAPS policy was not considered, the teachers support planning lacked differentiation, yet CAPS indicates that learner diversity should be addressed through curriculum differentiation CAPS policy was not*

considered, the teachers support planning lacked differentiation. However, CAPS indicates that learner diversity should be addressed through curriculum differentiation.



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## SUPPORT NEEDS ASSESSMENT FORM

### SNA 1 & 2: SCHOOL LEVEL

Surname and names of learner	DOB: 20.../.../... (yy/mm/dd)
	ID No. ....
	LURITS/CEMIS No. ....
Name of school:	EMIS No.: ....

CONFIDENTIAL

This is a confidential document that must be kept in the Learner Profile



*The HOD has no pseudonym. She will be referred to as Participant D, or HOD. She is the one that supplied the researcher with the copies of SNAS as well as the CAPS and SIAS policy documents. Participant D says that she will have workshops in order to induct teachers on how to use the SIAS and complete the SNAS properly. This implies that during the time of conducting this research, teachers in the Foundation Phase under her leadership were yet to learn about the SNAS and learner support, and that is also the reason*



why Rubi [pseudonym], a DBST facilitator, was invited to the school during the month of September 2019, so that she could empower teachers on how to support learners paying attention to their diversity.

**SUPPORT NEEDS ASSESSMENT (SNA 1 & 2)**  
**(School-Level Intervention)**

*Both SNA 1 and 2 must be completed at school level*

*A Learner Profile, SNA 1 and SNA 2 will be required when support is requested from the District-based Support Team (DBST).*

**SNA 1: ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION BY TEACHER**

*To be completed by the class teacher and/or subject teachers if the learner is taught by more than one teacher.*

- To be completed if the Learner Profile or Screening Report or teacher observation or parent interview shows that a learner has additional support needs.
- Captures information that will be needed when support is requested from the School-based Support Team (SBST) by the teacher concerned.

**1. AREAS OF CONCERN**

Describe your concern about the learner.


When did you become aware of this? \_\_\_\_\_


How did you become aware of this – own observation or was it reported?


How is this observation currently affecting the learner's learning and development? Describe.


Complete the following table with regard to the learner's scholastic profile (information extracted from Learning Profile)

YEAR							
GRADE							
RESULT (Pass/more time/ progressed)							
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ATTENDED							

Has any disability been diagnosed by a healthcare professional?  
(as captured in the Medical and Health Assessment Form [Annexure D])





**SNA 3: DISTRICT-BASED SUPPORT TEAM (DBST) INTERVENTION**

**REVIEW:**

- Review the information and supporting documents given in SNA 1 & 2 and discuss it with the SBST. Does the DBST agree with the SBST's identification of the barrier(s) experienced by the learner?

YES	NO	Comment:

- Review the interventions provided by the SBST to address the identified barrier(s) experienced by the learner. Have appropriate interventions been implemented?

YES	NO	Comment:

**DBST: GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORT**

When determining the support package for the learner or school, the DBST must use the following guidelines:

- The learner has a right to be supported in his/her current school or the school closest to his/her home.
- Irrespective of the level of support required, every effort should be made to make the support available to the learner in his/her current/closest school.
- The DBST may consider accessing Outreach Programmes from Full-Service Schools (FSS) and Special School Resource Centres (SSRC).
- The outplacement of the learner to an alternative setting to access a specialized support programme, should be the last resort.

**DBST: TABLE TO RATE LEVEL OF SUPPORT**

Use the table below to rate the level of support to be provided to the learner and the school and included in the DBST action plan):

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*SIAS policy advocates for screening identification assessment and support, but the teachers' learner support plans records did not show any of the stages regarded in SIAS. Screening and assessment records or stages were not indicated in the teachers plans as well, the lesson plans only show the last part of the policy namely support which meant that the teacher lacked knowledge of the policy.*

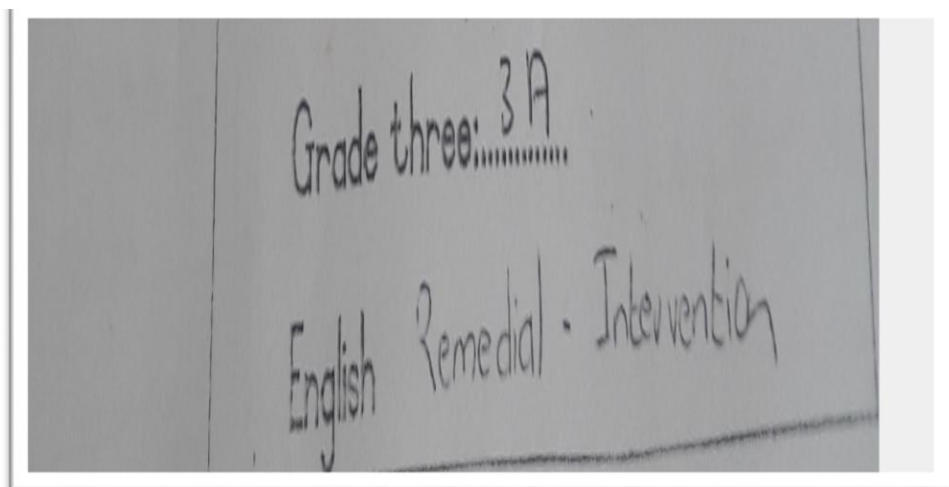
No section showed DBST intervention which was indicative of lack of monitoring from DBST.



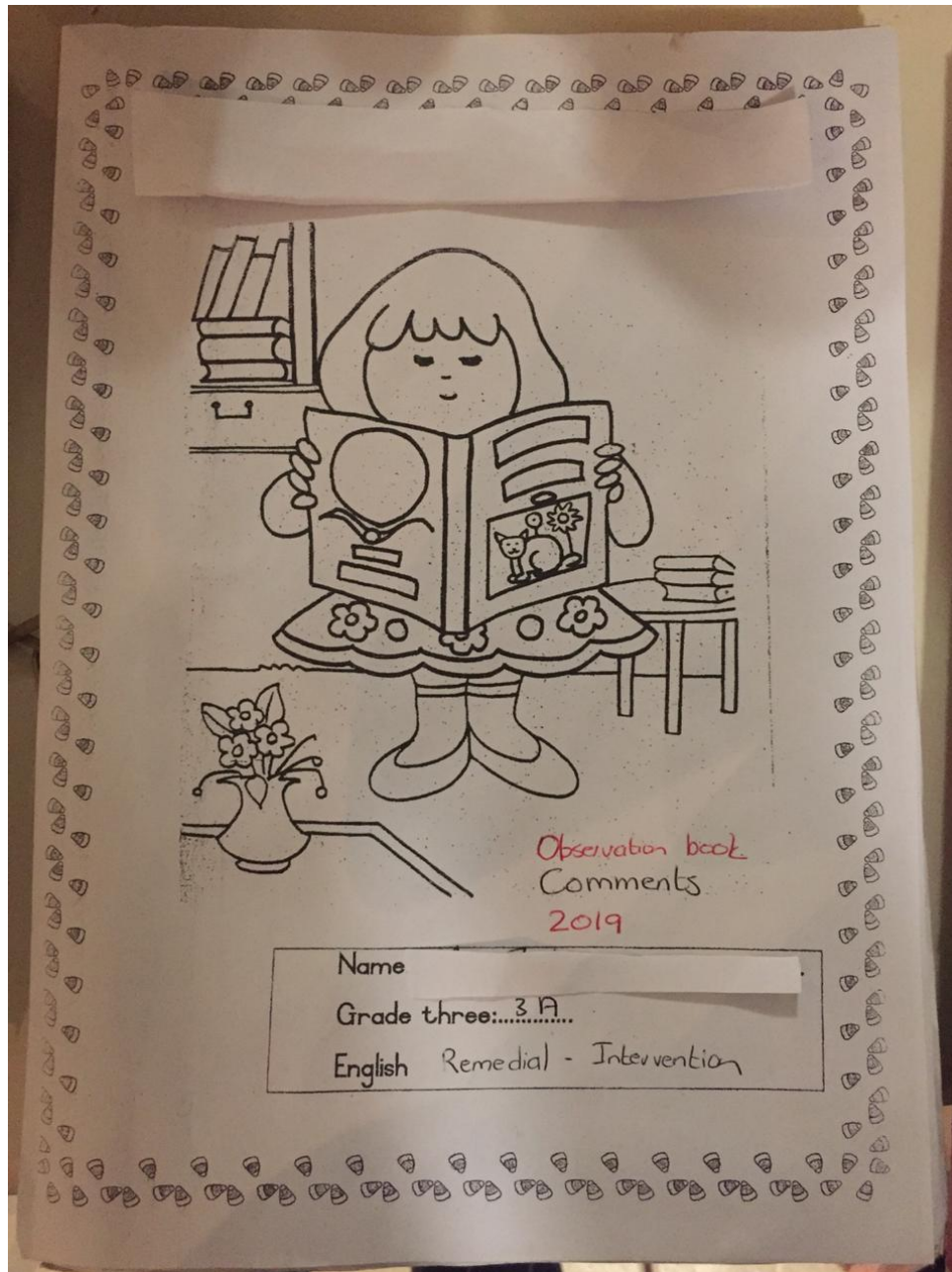
## **APPENDIX L: Samples of analysed teachers' learning support plans**

The teachers' documents that were analysed were the teaching and learning support plans as well as learners' support books, however, teachers did not use support books or SNAS (Special Needs Assessment forms) they used remedial books.

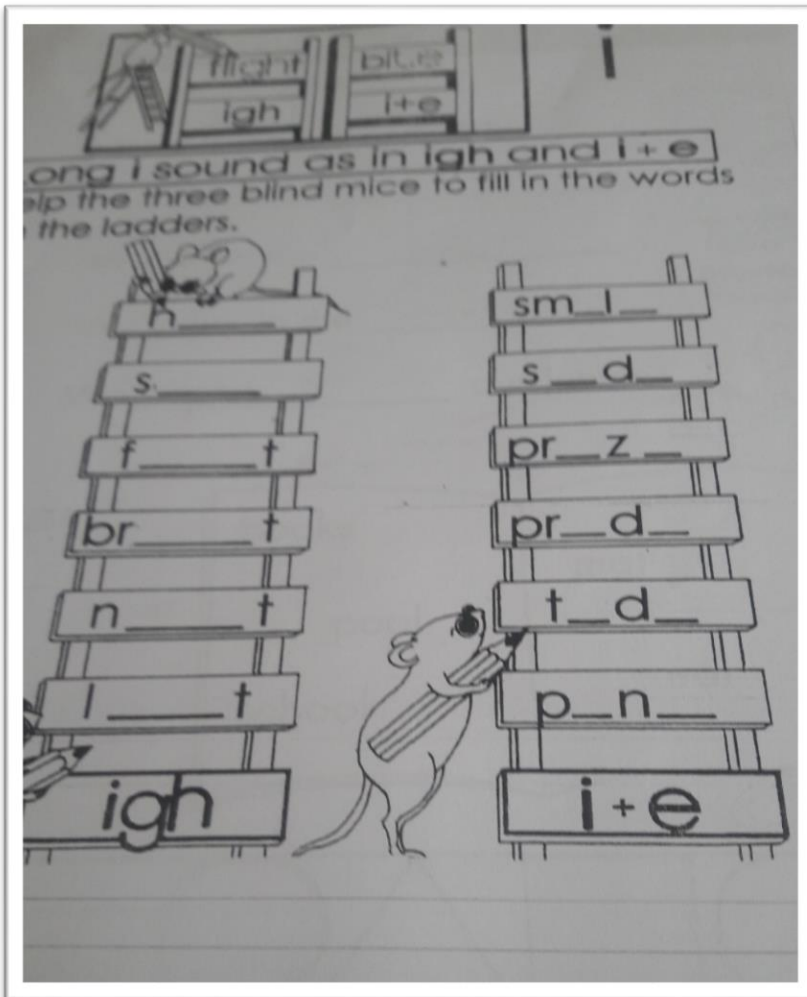
### **PARTICIPANT A: Pseudonym: Ronika**



*A remedial record does not imply any support that is consistent with the inclusive nature of diverse classrooms instead it is an advocate of categorisation that manifest exclusion.*



Teacher 'Ronika' had no plan in place that showed what the children were struggling with and how their learning styles had been identified and how they will be supported according to their diverse needs. Teacher Ronika uses the observation book as her learner support plan. The observation book monitors the learners' progress, it is not an action plan of work.

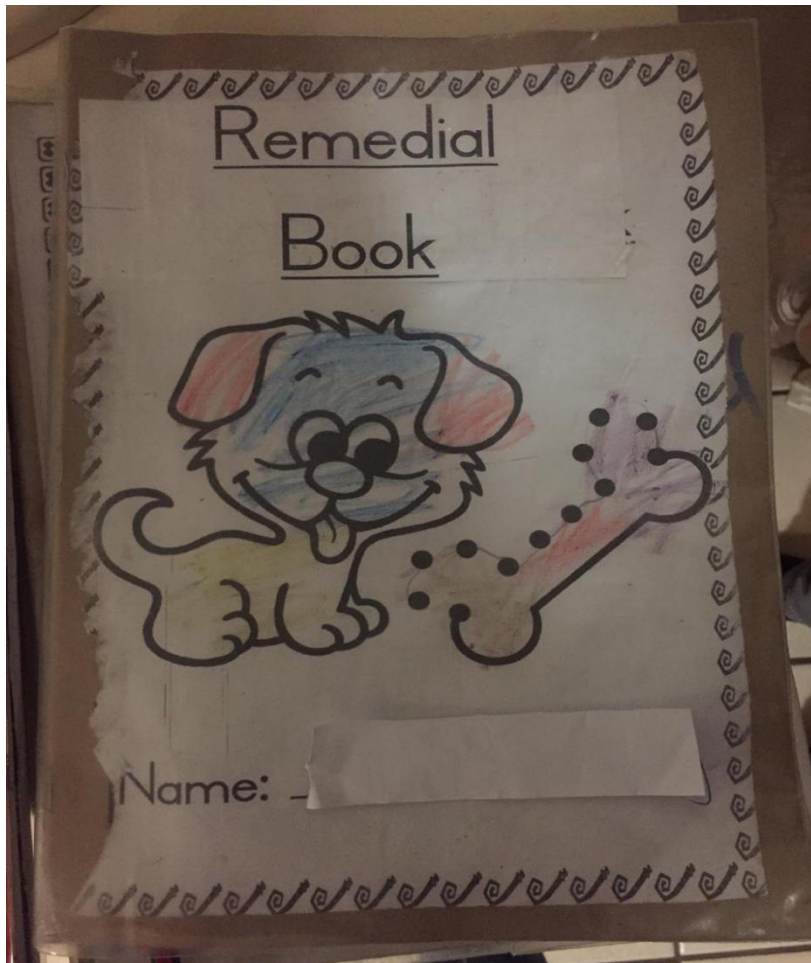


The teacher did not show an explanation of how this page was going to assist the struggling learners. No mention was made of learning styles and how this media could assist in teaching and learning. All learners were given the same worksheets, without regard for their diverse needs.

SIAS policy advocates for screening identification assessment and support, but the teachers' learner support plans records did not show any of the stages regarded in SIAS. Screening and assessment records or stages were not indicated in the teachers plans as well, the lesson plans only show the last part of the policy

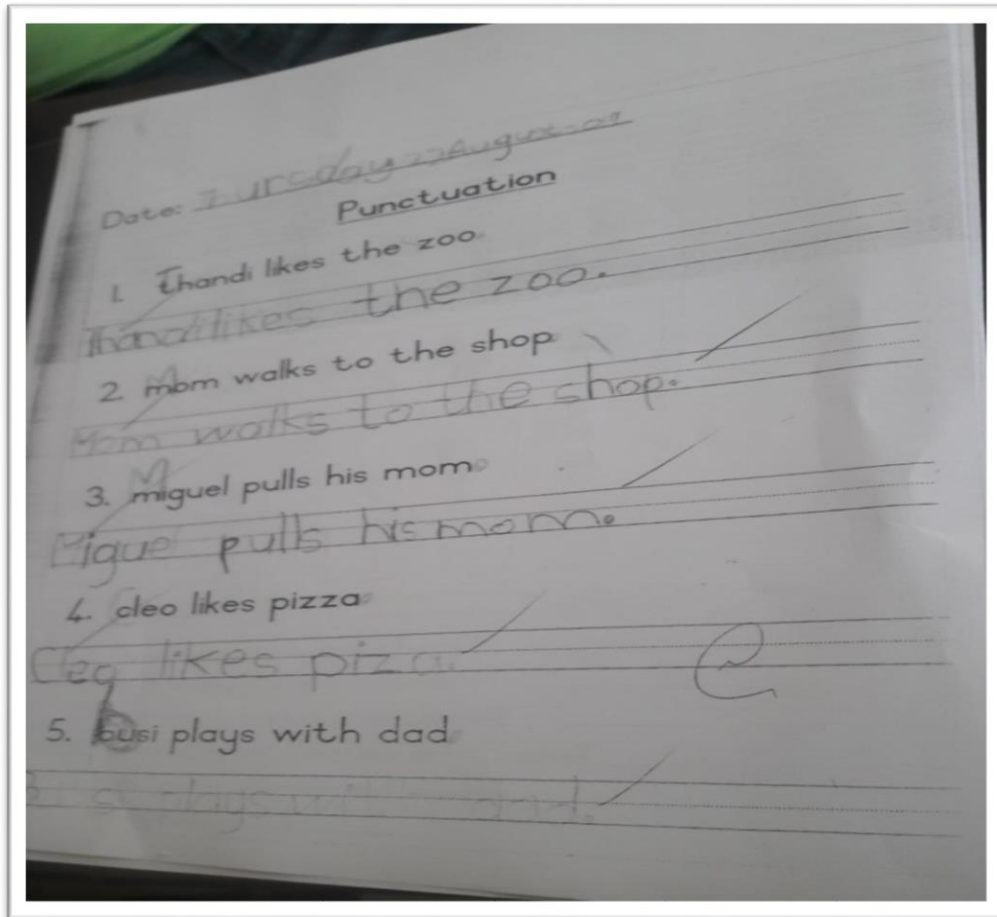
namely support which meant that the teacher lacked knowledge of the policy.

**PARTICIPANT B: Pseudonym: Beritha**



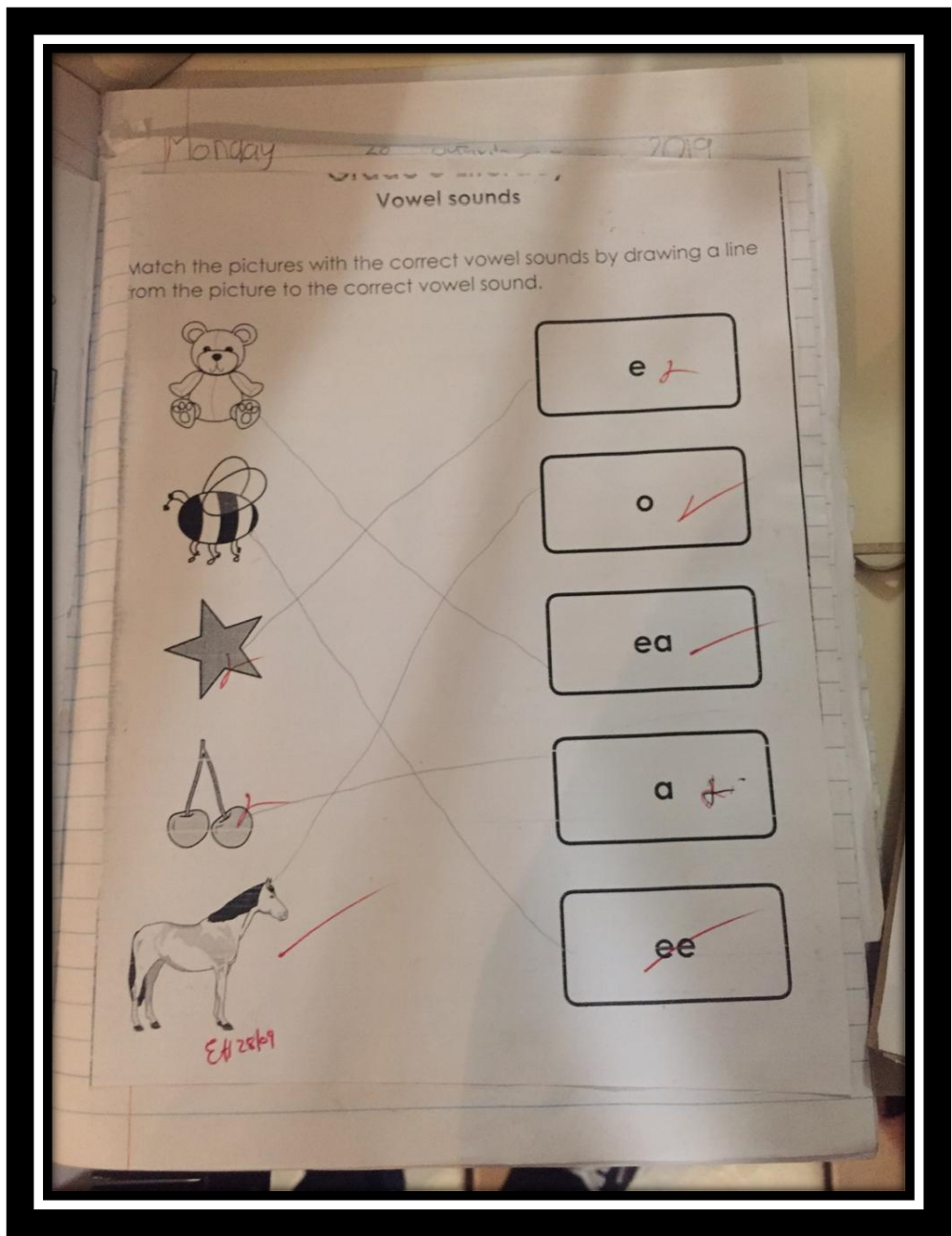
*A remedial record does not imply any support that is consistent with the inclusive nature of diverse classrooms. Instead, it is an advocate of categorisation that manifest exclusion meaning that when learners are given books labelled remedial they are classified as having a problem and needs fixing.*

*Teacher 'Beritha' had no plan in place that showed what the children were struggling with and how their learning styles had been identified and how they would be supported as per their diverse needs. Teacher Beritha uses the observation book as her learner support plan. The observation book monitors the learners' progress, and it is not an action plan of work.*



Pages like this one was just pasted in the learners' support books. No explanation was made to explain what the learner was struggling with and or what needed to be done by the learners.

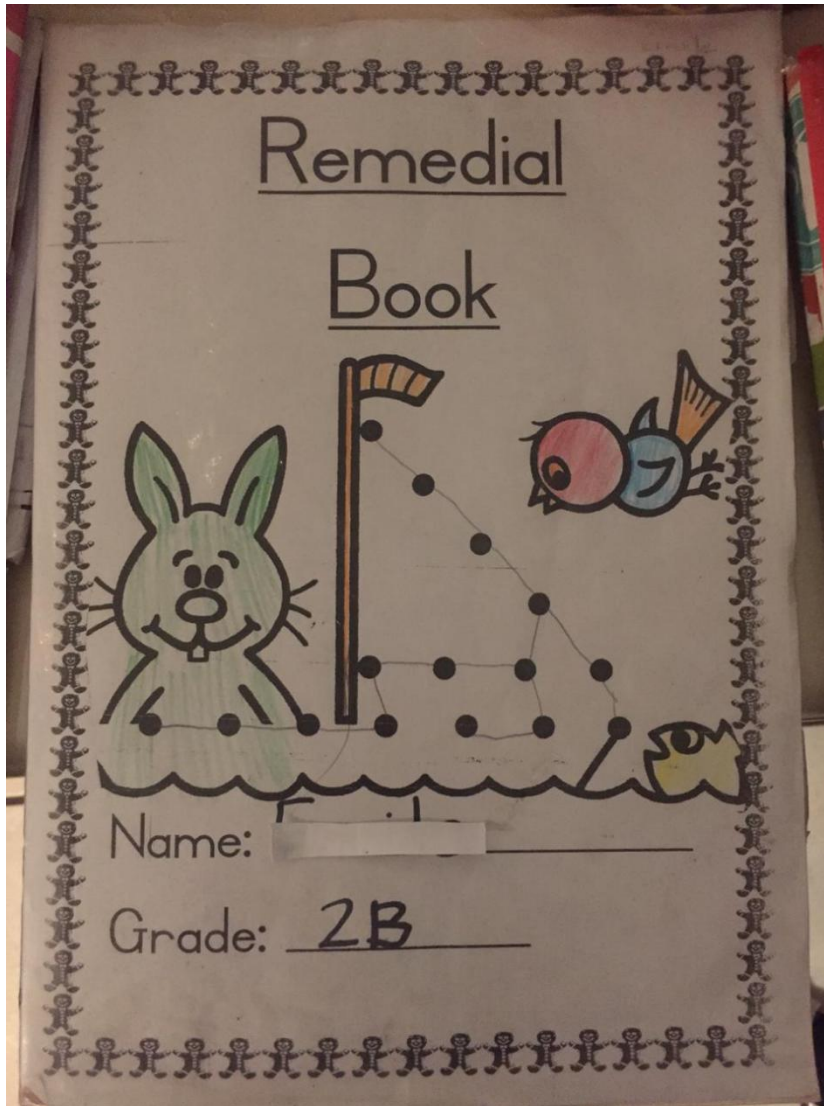




Pages like this one is one of the pages that were just pasted in the learners' support books. No explanation was given to explain what the learner was struggling with and/or what needed to be done by the teacher or learner.

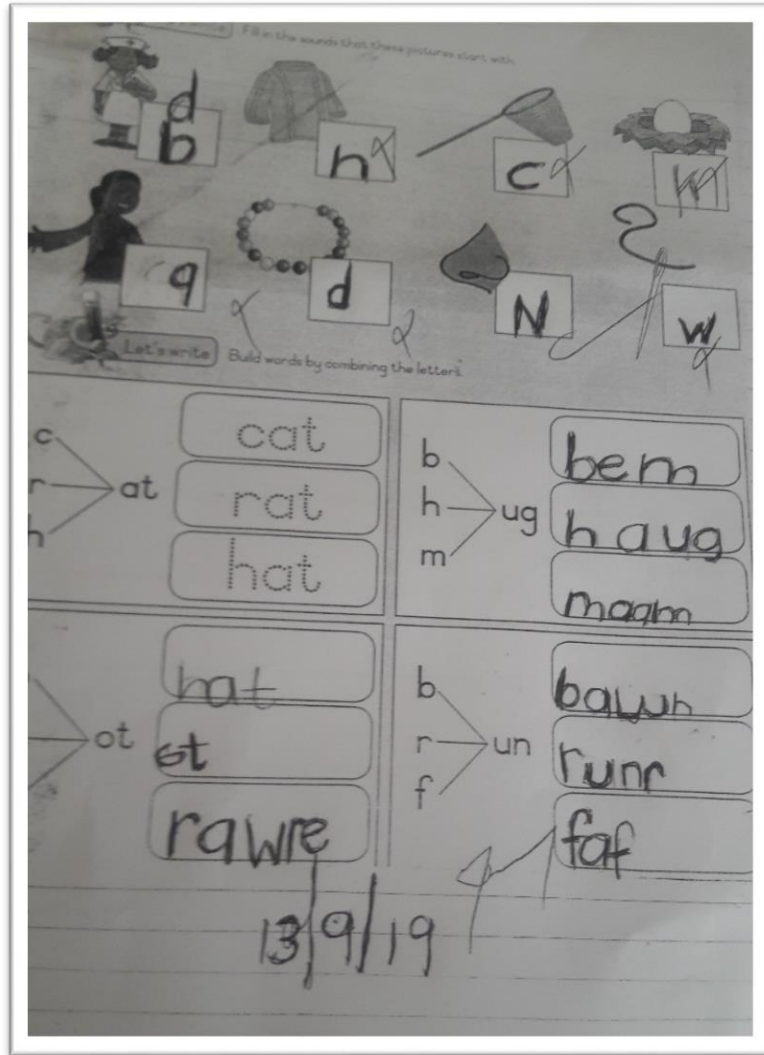


**Participant c: Pseudonym: Anna**



Teacher 'Anna' had no plan in place that showed what the children were struggling with, how their learning styles had been identified, and how they will be supported as per their diverse needs. Just like teacher Ronika and teacher Beritha, she uses the observation book as her learner support plan. The observation book monitors the learners' progress it is not an action plan of work, but surprisingly through data analysis processes, it was confirmed that teachers use the observation as learner support plans. No one consulted the SIAS or the CAPS document on curriculum and diversity. The CAPS categorically stated that'

teachers should address learner diversity through curriculum differentiation DoE 2017'.



*A page like this is one of the so many pages that the researcher observed during classroom observation and document analysis, they were loose independent papers that were pasted in learners supposedly 'support books'. These pages could not be linked to needs analysis and special needs assessment.*

4

English Home Language

Learner's Name:

D.O.B: 13/3/2012

Date	Area	Intervention	Outcomes
9/4	Phonics Single sounds	Taught single sounds Build words with given sounds & draw pictures	Completed act. but cannot sound & say words. Could not draw picture.
10/4	Single sounds	Repeated previous act. for consolida- tion	Still struggling to sound & say words
16/4	Phonics	Still in a or o to complete word	Recognised picture Could not complete word
24/4	Phonics	Repeated act. with diff pict.	Still struggling
7/5	Reading	Flashed simple words to improve word recognition	Could identify & say few of the words Could not recognise in read
14/5	Phonics/ Sentence Construction	Used phonics words taught to improve sentence construction	Could not read or understand sentence
22/5	Sentence Construction	Repeated previous act. as corrections	Answered orally. I wrote the answers.
19/7	He is still doing reversals		
26/7	He does not respond so		
8/9	it is very difficult to gauge his progress orally. He still		
23/8	battles with his written activities		

The last comment on the date; 28 August does not have a bearing on the support needs of the learner, considering that the observation page has three sections namely: Area / Intervention / Outcome.

## APPENDIX M: Analysis of transcripts

The following are examples of codes and patterns that were identified from the data analysis.

### Key:

PA–PD Interview response from teachers

CLOB[PA] Class Observation [ Participant A -C]

DA [PA]: Document analysis [ Participant A -D]

	PARTTERNS
<b>Theme 1</b>	
<b>Accommodating diverse learning needs</b>	
<p><b>1.Learning and learner support Environment</b></p> <p><b>PA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-You cannot get back to basics; you cannot do your support the way you should do.</li> <li>- We started with support many years ago when we were working teaching in groups: ‘the three Rs’, reading, writing, and arithmetic.</li> <li>- We started with support many years ago when we were working teaching in groups: ‘the three Rs’, reading, writing, and arithmetic.</li> </ul>	<p>-support</p> <p>-diversity</p> <p>-diversity</p>

<p>- You have to remember not all children are at some level especially with common exams.</p> <p>- Department comes with the common exams inclusion is that you have to adapt the work for inclusion.</p>	
<p><b>PB:</b></p> <p>What is the meaning of this diverse?</p> <p>- You have to attend to these children you have to even find out what is the cause of everything which is happening in the classroom.</p>	<p>-diversity</p>
<p><b>PC:</b></p> <p>- My experience is that the, eh it is very difficult to support because the diversity is so vast.</p> <p>- I find that a lot of kids that have learning barrier don't have the ability to write so we do everything in concrete and then answer in oral orally.</p>	<p>-diversity</p> <p>-support</p>
<p><b>PD</b></p> <p>- So those children we don't put them aside we include them in our day to day teaching but having some strategies to address their challenges as a whole in that one lesson that I am preparing my children</p>	<p>-diversity</p> <p>-learner support environment</p>
<p><b>CLOB:</b> the researcher sat down in the classrooms and took note of the LOLT that was used by the teacher, a lot of learners could not follow or respond to the teacher during the lesson.</p> <p><b>DA: PA</b> "There is evidence that teachers are supporting learners who are experiencing barriers to learning." But there is no evidence of signatures from school-based support team or from the DBST.</p>	<p>Accommodate learners</p> <p>LoLT</p> <p>No monitoring</p>
<p><b>2.Teaching and learning strategies</b></p>	

<p><b>PA</b></p> <p><i>How can a teacher that does not have remedial background support a learner/ some children are helped in groups when you can do your support right?</i></p> <p>- <i>Different strategies I think the children that are in need of support needs to work more practically which takes longer.</i></p>	<p>-group teaching</p> <p>-Learning styles</p>
<p><b>PA</b></p> <p>- <i>It would be better for some children to work practically on their own in their own classroom.</i></p> <p>- <i>You have to put in different strategies; even with phonic sound cards, they need to learn how to build words they need to learn how to write sentences if you sit with them.</i></p>	<p>-</p> <p>-individual learning</p> <p>- learning/teaching styles</p>
<p><b>PB:</b> <i>The learning area will direct me if we are doing reading or listening and speaking, those children will have to draw or write.</i></p>	<p>-subject matter, not learner's learning style</p>
<p><b>PC</b></p> <p><i>I plan according to my own personal strategies, yes, I do in terms of phonics; I use concrete shapes that show the pictures single sounds that I have. Eh in Maths, I use a lot of concrete apparatus as well in reading I do the old ways were I break up the sentences into words and they match the words, it seems to be working for now with children that are not bad.</i></p>	<p>-Own strategy used</p> <p>-learning and teaching aids</p>
<p><b>PC</b></p> <p><i>I give them easier activities I am a grade 2 teacher so I get Grade R activities I go basically right back to the foundation just to make the concept easier.</i></p>	<p>-intellectual maturity</p> <p>-commitment</p>
	<p>-</p>

<p><b>CLOBPB:</b> During her session, PB used cards to assess learner spelling skills and level of functioning, the learner was given cards with pictures and were supposed to identify the picture and then guess what is on the picture.</p>	<p>-Own strategy</p>
<p><b>CLOB PC</b> During the spelling test, some learners could not pronounce even a single three letter words the teacher pronounced the words for them.</p> <p><b>PD</b> so those children we don't put them aside we include them in our day to day teaching but having some strategies to address their challenges as a whole in that one lesson that I am preparing my children.</p>	

<p><b>Theme 2</b> Partnership between parents and teachers as central to learner support</p>	
<p><b>PA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I would say 20% of parents are involved the parents are not involved.</li> <li>- Parental involvement is next to nothing but nothing is happening at home.</li> <li>- You know what I look at education as a triangle the educator the child and the parent we have to work together to create a child that will be able to fulfil his position in life in as a citizen of South Africa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-minimal parental involvement</li> <li>-little parental input</li> <li>-ned to put parent on board.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PB:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some of the parents don't support but most of them are supportive.</li> <li>- Maybe you are having a problem with a parent they will intervene.</li> <li>- They come to school some doesn't even agree if you can tell them hey your child is doing this, is not behaving well like this is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-parental involvement not fully supportive</li> <li>-hostile parents</li> <li>-denial of parents</li> </ul>



<p><i>not doing the work they will just say ah that child is doing very well at home when I give him something to do he is doing well finding that it differs with that you are saying.</i></p>	
<p><b>DA</b> There was no evidence of parents' signatures on the registers for parental meetings.</p>	<p>-lack of parental support</p>
<p>PC:</p>	
<p><b>PD:</b> <i>The parents don't care about whatever we are sending learners with to assist at home.</i></p> <p><i>- homework is where we reinforce but then you find out that the home work is not done.</i></p> <p><i>- I just want to say Inclusive Education is a very good thing but with the type of children we are having?</i></p>	<p>lack of parental support</p> <p>- lack of parental support</p> <p>- no faith in learners</p> <p>-attitude of learners is negative.</p>

<p><b>THEME 3 SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES</b></p> <p>Insufficient training of teachers.</p>	
<p><b>PA:</b> - <i>When inclusion was introduced no education was introduced no education of teachers took place they presume that you can do remedial.</i></p>	<p>-Lack of support from the district</p>
<p><b>PC:</b> - <i>And I had not been trained in how to handle the diversity.</i></p> <p><i>- some of the learning barriers are so complex I can't identify them because I don't have the qualification.</i></p>	<p>-teachers need training</p> <p>-no training</p> <p>-no qualification</p>
<p><b>P D:</b></p> <p><i>I am not trained but as a Foundation Phase teacher you come across those things in everyday teaching.</i></p>	<p>-lack of training</p>

<p><b>PD</b></p> <p><i>If we don't separate them, I think we need intensive training then as teachers...the way we are going to be trained and understand the learners their nature...</i></p>	<p>-need to be trained</p> <p>-lack of training</p>
--	---

<p>2. <b>Overcrowding in classroom.</b></p>	
<p>PA: -</p> <p><i>some children are helped in groups when you can do your support right, but nowadays classes are too big in the first place,</i></p>	-overcrowding
<p>PB: -<i>My classroom is overcrowded ...and sometimes you neglect them. The learning area will direct me</i></p>	-overcrowding
<p>PC: <i>It's very conducive to learning in education its fine just the classroom size is too big and there is no space for us to move to the children with learning barriers.</i></p> <p>- Yes, some I am saying some do and no some don't because they are so many.</p>	-overcrowding -overcrowding
<p>PD: <i>Oh ok I understands it is our class size is very big so we don't have individual attention.</i></p>	-overcrowding

<p><b>2. Language of learning and teaching (LoLT)</b></p>	
<p>PA: <i>And again you know what our Home Language, and school language of learning and teaching is English, the children are talking a slang they are not talking fully English they have got their own words, they</i></p>	-LoLT
<p>PC: <i>I found that the language barriers, I speak within my class I have four different languages at the moment, so it is very difficult to do it.</i></p>	-LoLT  --LoLT becomes a barrier

- I make it through to the ones that have learning barrier and they speak English but the Afrikaans and the vernacular languages I am not getting through and I can't because I can only speak English.	-
CLOB [PA] A lot of learners failed to respond to simple questions during classwork	LoLT
CLOB[PC] A lot of learners failed to respond to simple questions during classwork	LOLT

<b>THEME 4</b> <b>LEARNER SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM</b>	
<b>1. Socio-economic background of the learner.</b> PA: - Remember also here in our area children are having children.  -They became parents they don't finish their high school so how can they help their children with homework?  -They are not even adults, they don't have any qualification, no qualification,  -You know what? most children are staying with Grannies  - You look at the background of our learners it's a low social economic status.	-Social Problems  -No value for education -Neglect -Child headed families -grandmothers too old to take care of children. -poverty
-PA	hunger

<p>- We are sitting with another groups of children their mind is to put food on the table.</p>	
<p>PB: Find that <b>at home the background itself</b> is the one which lead them to that situation, in the classroom their performances sometimes its dragged by the home.</p> <p>- <b>Finding that it's the background from home</b> and so you have some times to call parents in order to find more about the situation of the child what makes that child not to perform well or his the behaviour itself.</p>	<p>-learner misses out</p> <p>-lack of parental involvement.</p>
<p>PD: ... even <b>the social economic background is affecting us</b> there were the parents doesn't care about whatever we are sending learners with to assist at home.</p> <p>- homework is where we <b>reinforce</b> but then you find out that <b>the home work is not done.</b></p>	<p>-social problems</p> <p>-</p> <p>-no reinforcement of concepts at home</p>
<p><b>2.Lack of SBST/NO DBST support</b></p> <p>PA In the first place we have to start with the curriculum, the <b>curriculum is too vasisit you</b> cannot get back to basics</p>	<p>-curriculum officials' demands</p> <p>-challenges, teachers are compelled to cover the curriculum</p>
<p>PA the curriculum becomes <b>a challenge</b> because for me ,it looks like there is more quantity than quality, curriculum is a major thing and they <b>demand</b> curriculum coverage</p>	<p>-teachers are overwhelmed</p>
<p>PA: my major problem is <b>teachers, even at district level</b> they didn't get <b>there is no support</b> I was teaching curriculum. It was stated by teacher, that the CAPS is too varsity for the little ones to handle.</p>	<p>-lack of support from SBST teachers</p> <p>-lack of support from district officials---DBST</p> <p>-</p>

<p>DA [PC] <i>There is no signature of a district official or an official stamp to show that the work of teachers is controlled and mentored, for example how many learners do they support ,how do the teachers use different learning styles and do their intervention have an impact on struggling learners.</i></p>	<p>-No support</p> <p>-No monitoring</p>
<p>DA [PB] : <i>There was no evidence of parents' signatures in the learners' homework books to show that they monitor and assist their children with school work at home.</i></p>	<p>No monitoring</p> <p>-No support from parents</p>
<p>PA: <i>Give the teachers teaching assistance!</i></p>	<p>pressure being exerted on teachers</p>
<p>PB: <i>at the end of the day you sometimes neglect them!</i></p>	<p>Frustrations: lacks of DBST/SBST support</p>
<p>PC: <i>I receive absolutely no support and there is no viable means of getting in touch with them so we just go on at our own rate doing our own thing.</i></p>	<p>-Lack of DBST support</p>
<p>DA [PA-PD]: <i>Every week teachers planned and commented in the observation books that was informed by the way the learner performed but no intervention really took place.</i></p>	<p>Quality control</p>
<p><b>3. Lack of assistive devices</b></p>	
<p>PD: Resources <i>we don't have at all.</i> <i>Because they are those learners who depend on sight those ones who want to touch and taste and use their senses so that we don't have we are limited in terms of resource.</i></p>	<p>-lack of resources</p> <p>- lack of relevant assistive devices</p>
<p>Participant D: <i>I don't think it is adequate because when I look at how different the learners are in our school situation we are limited in terms of resources we don't have the audio the visuals we only have the</i></p>	<p>-inadequate resources</p>

<p><i>charts its visual neh? and kinetics were they have to touch and taste and I feel we don't have such things the resources are limiting us.</i></p>	<p>- lack of relevant assistive devices</p>
<p><b>CLOB [PC]:</b> There is no evidence of stationery provided; each one uses whatever material available. Some teachers used plain books, others big books a colour pencil or pens.</p>	<p>-unavailability of stationery. -resources.</p>
<p>DA PC-D, teachers did not have SNAS</p>	<p>resources</p>

## Appendix: N. Letter from the Editor

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**EDITING CERTIFICATE**

LANGUAGE EDITING SERVICES

Date: 2020/5/18

This serves to confirm that the document entitled:

FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING LEARNER

SUPPORT IN JOHANNESBURG NORTH DISTRICT

By

LOISE MARUFU

has been language edited on behalf of its author, with recommendations for improvement.

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