

**AN ECOSYSTEMIC APPROACH TO ASSESSING
BARRIERS TO LEARNING: A CASE STUDY IN A SOUTH
AFRICAN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in Educational Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

Recent legislation in South Africa has changed education considerably, particularly in the move towards inclusive education. Previous educational provision in South Africa, as in many countries, assigned many learners with learning difficulties to segregated settings. Such placements tended to be based on the psycho-medical, intelligence-testing model of identifying learning difficulties. Much research has queried the effectiveness of this approach. However, as no alternative model has been researched, it was decided to research the effectiveness of using an ecosystemic approach in conjunction with a collaborative consultancy model as a method for identifying learning needs in high school learners in a South African public secondary school.

Various methods of qualitative data collection were used during the intervention, and comparative analysis was employed to analyse the data. The findings of this study suggest that an ecosystemic approach used together with a collaborative consultancy approach to identify and understand learning diversity is a viable process in inclusive education contexts. However, it is acknowledged that a considerable body of research needs to be achieved before this finding can be considered conclusive. In addition, certain constraints to using this approach were acknowledged, and these include the time, expertise and money needed to facilitate the process successfully.

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