



Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools:

Township Teachers' Perceptions

By:

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DECLARATION

I, Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo, I hereby confirm that this research report is entirely my own work. All sources referenced and cited in this report have been properly acknowledged. This report is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education (Educational Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been previously submitted for any other degree or to any other educational institution.



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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this research report explored township teachers' perceptions of the support they require from educational psychologists in implementing the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), which was introduced by the Department of Basic Education in 2014. The study focused on township teachers because of the gap in existing literature pertaining to their perceptions of the support needed from educational psychologists for effective implementation of the SIAS policy. The SIAS policy advocates for inclusive education, and places teachers at the forefront of its implementation, often with the support of other professionals (e.g., educational psychologists) who can facilitate inclusivity in education. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the type of support teachers require from educational psychologists to ensure that inclusivity is effectively practiced. As education is considered a basic right in South Africa, and is a fundamental element of all human societies, it is essential that teachers receive adequate support to uphold and promote inclusive education. Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory served as the theoretical framework for the study, providing a foundation for the analysis of the data generated and structuring of the discussion of the findings. This framework was used to connect the various systems outlined in the theory to the core individual of the study, namely, township teachers. The study adopted an interpretivist paradigm and an exploratory research design, as both emphasise the subjective nature of individuals' experiences. This approach was well-suited to the study's aim of capturing and documenting the unique perceptions of the study participants. Purposive sampling was employed to select seven township teachers from two schools, a high school and a primary school. The study participants were individually interviewed in face-to-face sessions. The data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, where themes were generated from the transcribed words of the study participants. Four main themes were developed, and they are: (1) The SIAS policy: "A great policy", but difficult to implement; (2) Free State DBST (FSDBST) inefficiencies obstruct the implementation of the SIAS policy; (3) Bridging the Gap: Turning to

External Support for DBST Shortcomings; and (4) Alleviating the Burden: Calling for Onsite Educational Psychologist for SIAS Policy Implementation. The findings of this study reveal a persistent gap in the implementation of inclusive education in schools that were originally targeted by the SIAS policy. These findings underscore the importance of raising awareness within the FSDBST regarding the underlying factors contributing to the inadequate implementation of the SIAS policy in public schools, particularly in the Fezile Dabi district, where the study was conducted. Moreover, the findings offer valuable insights into how the implementation of the SIAS policy could be improved, specifically through the assignment of an educational psychologist to each school.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DBST	District-Based Support Team
DoBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
FET Phase	Further Education and Training Phase
FSDBST	Free State District Based Support Team

NCESS	National Committee for Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SIAS Policy	Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support
SNA Form	Student Needs Assessment Form

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOUTH AFRICAN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1.1) Overview of the Chapter

This chapter aims to provide context and background information that is of relevance to the study presented in this research report. The chapter explicitly outlines the objectives of the study and provides justification that underscores the importance of this research within the field of psychology. Furthermore, the research question is identified, and an overview of the research report structure is presented to give the reader an outline of how the study was carried out and will be presented.

1.2) Introduction

When the Apartheid era came to an end, the South African new ruling independent government took steps to accommodate the diverse learner population and provide comprehensive educational support (Engelbrecht, 2020). This was highlighted by the appointment of the National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) in 1997, with the purpose of addressing the challenges of the diverse learner population including shortcomings of the previously exclusive education system of the Apartheid era (Department of Education [DoE], 1997). These committees included individuals affected by this exclusion, such as parents of learners with development and learning barriers, activists, and other professionals (Daniels, 2010). It was a group of individuals with varying skills and experiences. The goal of the two committees was to address the exclusions of the Apartheid education system by adopting a more holistic approach to ensure equity in the education system hence establishing a consensus (DoE, 1997) and introducing the Education White Paper 6 in 2001 (Department of Education [DoE], 2001). The Education White Paper 6 allowed for an integrated system that promoted community collaboration, inclusion of children with developmental and learning challenges into mainstream institutes, inclusive education and training, supportive approaches, funding strategies, high-quality education for

everyone, including the promotion of rights and responsibilities for all those within the education system (Daniels, 2010; DoE, 2001; Engelbrecht, 2004).

The Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) which was introduced by the Department of Basic Education in 2014 emanates from the Education White Paper 6's advocacy of inclusive education and training within the school environment, with inclusivity referring to equality, high quality education, support for every learner despite their different learning capabilities and being accommodative of learners with learning barriers (Department of Basic Education [DoBE], 2014). The SIAS policy was promulgated by the DoBE (2014) after the DoE was divided into the DoBE and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2009 (Makhanya & Botha, 2015). As a result, some references in this research report will pertain to the DoE, while others will refer to the DoBE. Due to the subjective nature of the concept "barriers to learning" (also referred to as learning barriers), and given its frequent use throughout this study, the term is defined in alignment with the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014, p. 7), which defines it as "factors relating to social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, disability, or family and care circumstances" that prevents the child from fully exercising their right to access education. The SIAS policy emphasises the involvement of various professionals who are assigned different roles in supporting the development and learning of all learners. Teachers, together with educational psychologists, play an integral role in supporting the development and learning of learners as they are bound by the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014). The primary responsibility of teachers is encapsulated in their title, it is to teach, but the SIAS policy also assigns them the responsibility of being at the forefront, actively assessing learners with learning and development barriers, designing and implementing interventions to address these, liaising with the School-Based Support Team (SBST), and only calling on the assistance of other professionals such as district educational psychologists who makes part of the District-Based Support Team (DBST) if these interventions do not prove sufficiently successful (DoBE, 2014). In understanding the role of an educational psychologist within the school setting and in the context of the SIAS policy, Rothi et al. (2008), refers to these professionals

as being more purpose-specific as they are regarded as the teacher's guide through conducting assessments, designing interventions, and offering counselling services to support the learning and development of learners when a teacher's initial efforts have not been successful.

The working alliance between teachers and district-based educational psychologists appears to be more active among schools classified within quintiles 1 to 3 because they are more dependent on the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) for support and resources, whereas schools within the 4th and 5th quintiles are more independent and parents of learners in these schools tend to have the financial means to seek external educational and psychological services (Maistry & Africa, 2020). Based on this, the primary criterion for selecting participants for this study was being a teacher at schools within the first 3 quintiles. The selected sample for this study consisted of teachers from two township schools located within the Fezile Dabi district in the Free State. These schools rely entirely on the DoBE for funding and resources, as they fall within the first 3 quintiles and are therefore classified as no-fee schools (National Department of Basic Education [NDoBE], 2023). The schools where the study participants are employed had never had an onsite educational psychologist and always seek assistance from the DBST for referrals of learners with learning barriers. Referring back to Rothl et al's. (2008) definition of an educational psychologist, the skills they possess seem to align with the responsibilities assigned to teachers by the SIAS policy. As teachers are viewed as the pillars of the education system as they possess varying capabilities aiming at enriching the learning experiences of learners (Leu, 2005), it is equally imperative to know the kind of support they need from educational psychologists as professionals who are trained and possess skills aligned with child development, in helping them fulfill their responsibilities as delineated in the SIAS policy.

1.3) Rationale

The SIAS policy expands on the Education White Paper 6's element of inclusion in the education system (DoBE, 2014). It is an inclusive education policy which focuses on

children with barriers to learning, further denoting teachers as case managers binding them to the responsibility of being the first point of reference in assessing and formulating interventions for learners who present with learning barriers (DoBE, 2014). Educational psychologists make part of the support structure within this policy; however, they are found within the DBST (DoBE, 2014). Looking at the recent limited research that focuses on teachers and their perceptions regarding the SIAS policy, it was found in a study conducted by Hess (2020), that some teachers regarded inclusive education promoted by the SIAS policy to be “good for the child, but this makes life very difficult for the teacher” (p. 55), as they experience challenges in assessing children with learning barriers and in developing interventions to support them. The challenges faced by teachers are further emphasised by Melane (2022) and Ntseto et al. (2021) who mention issues such as lack of teacher training and deficiency of resources as contributing to the difficulties in developing successful interventions for children with learning barriers in public schools. With these challenges in mind, Mncube and Lebopa (2019) advocate for teachers to receive “continuous training and support on the implementation of inclusive education particularly on aspects of SIAS” (p.146). A lot of emphasis is placed on teachers to identify and assist learners experiencing learning barriers; however, teachers do not always feel prepared to fulfill this role.

The frustrations experienced by teachers in having to act on the responsibilities assigned to them by the SIAS policy (Hess, 2020; Mkhuma et al., 2014) were also supported by disorder-specific research studies. For instance, teachers in a study conducted by Karimupfumbi and Dwarika (2022), focusing on challenges teachers face in assessing and supporting learners with dyslexia as a barrier to learning and development, reported challenges with implementing the SIAS policy requesting “further professional development workshops on the implementation of the SIAS tool” (p. 7). A recent study by Nomsa (2020), which unpacked rural teachers’ perceptions regarding access to educational psychologists, further supported the element of frustration stating that despite teachers playing their part in inclusive education, the Department of Education fails to provide services of educational psychologists. Research studies discussed thus far (i.e., Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Hess,

2020; Melane, 2022; Mkhuma et al., 2014; Nomsa, 2020; Ntseto et al., 2021) constitutes part of the limited body of literature that examines teachers' perceptions of the SIAS policy. Only a few of the research studies discussed were conducted in township public schools. By township public schools, reference is made to space and schools within the first 3 quintiles as they are dependent on the DoBE for funding and resources (Maistry & Africa, 2020).

Although research has started to embrace teachers in their active role in inclusive education and in the implementation of the SIAS policy, there is still a gap that needs to be filled by directing focus to the difficulties which they experience and their need for the support of educational psychologists in fulfilling their responsibilities. This study aims to extend beyond teachers' general perceptions of the SIAS policy by focusing specifically on their perceptions of the support required from educational psychologists, with particular attention to township public schools, a context that remains under-researched. This study can potentially contribute to the current literature by addressing some of the shortcomings of published literature when it comes to the working relationship between teachers and educational psychologists at South African township public schools.

Understanding teachers' perceptions regarding the support needed from educational psychologists at South African schools, specifically township public schools within the first 3 quintiles as they rely entirely on the DoBE for support and funding, can provide further insight into the integrated relations between educational psychologists and teachers in South Africa. Teachers are more likely to provide a better perspective, as they are rooted in schools daily, and they are more informed about the support needed from educational psychologists in a school setting. This is relevant to the field of educational psychology as it addresses the challenges and support needed within the school environment for the improvement of the implementation of the SIAS policy.

1.4) Aim of the Research Study

The present study aims to investigate township schools falling within the first 3 quintiles in the Free State province (and specifically the Fezile Dabi District), exploring

teachers' perceptions on the support required from educational psychologists in supporting teachers to meet the requirements set out in the SIAS policy.

1.5) Research Question

Related to the research objective, the primary research question for this study was: What are township teachers' perceptions about the support they need from educational psychologists in supporting them to implement the SIAS policy?

1.6) Research Report Outline

This research report consists of six chapters and an outline of the content covered in every chapter is provided below:

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the research topic by outlining the rationale, study objective, and research question. It also presents a synopsis of the inclusive education context in South Africa.

Chapter 2: This chapter provide a literature review exploring the progression of inclusive education policies in South Africa, with a particular focus on analysing teachers' perceptions on the SIAS policy. Teachers are further understood through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory.

Chapter 3: This is the methodology chapter which explores the research design and method, sample and sampling, research instrument, procedures followed, ethical considerations, data analysis approach, and reflections on positionality. This chapter outlines the process by which the research was carried out.

Chapter 4: This chapter presents the findings, exploring the various themes which resulted from data analysis with the aim of addressing the research question.

Chapter 5: This is the discussion chapter where each identified theme is analysed and contextualised within the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory and existing literature.

Chapter 6: This chapter is the concluding chapter, presenting the overview of the study, study implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

1.7) Summary of the Chapter

The introduction offers a comprehensive overview of the topic, focusing on inclusive education in South Africa and teachers' perceptions regarding the SIAS policy. It emphasises the need for further research, particularly concerning how teachers in South African township schools perceive the SIAS policy. The rationale clearly highlights the existing research gap, demonstrating why the chosen research topic which is exploring teachers' perceptions of the support they need from educational psychologists in implementing the SIAS policy, aligns well with the field of psychology. The scope and objectives of the research aim are clearly defined, alongside the specific research question that guides the research report's inquiry into this focal area of study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1) Overview of the Chapter

This chapter explores the literature on the development of the SIAS policy in South Africa, detailing the roles assigned to teachers and educational psychologists within this policy. It aims to clarify how teachers view the SIAS policy and the involvement of psychologists in its implementation. This investigation closely aligns with the research objective, which aims to explore teachers' perceptions on the support they need from educational psychologists to effectively implement the SIAS policy. The main goal of Chapter 2 is to present a history of the education system in South Africa tracing its progression from the apartheid era to the introduction of the SIAS policy while also examining how teachers perceive and understand this policy framework. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Theory will be explored, as the study is grounded within this theoretical framework.

2.2) The Chronicles of Mainstream and Inclusive Education in South Africa

Inclusive education has not always been part of the South African education system due to historical events that fostered an education system built on (race-based) exclusion. By inclusive education, reference is made to equality, high-quality education, and support to all learners irrespective of their varying learning abilities (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). The Apartheid system, as a well-known political dispensation and historical period, created an education system that separated the privileged (White learners) from the underprivileged (African, Coloured, and Indian learners) based on race (Thomas, 1996). This posed a challenge for many, predominantly African learners, to access quality education as they constituted the biggest percentage of the underprivileged group (Daniels, 2010; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2004). African learners were not favoured by the education system as they were enrolled in Bantu education in which their mathematical and science abilities were not stimulated, with no support nor resources provided for African learners in special schools (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). In contrast, learners who were classified as

White were permitted to attend schools in which there was quality curriculum which included mathematics and science. Moreover, White learners with disabilities were accommodated in well-resourced special schools (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

Coloured and Indian learners were also segregated in schools on the basis of race. However, when compared to African learners, Indian learners tended to have access to a better quality of education. As attested by Thomas (1996), during the Apartheid era, superior funding was available for Indian learners while African children were only allocated “the same level of education” (p. 330) as Coloured learners in 1960. The former education system did not only segregate children based on race, but also on ability. As a result, Muthukrishna and Schoeman (2000) indicated that “inequities in provision resulted in highly specialised and costly provision of special needs education and support services for a limited number of learners, the majority being White and Indian learners” (p. 316). Further discrimination was seen in the better-resourced remedial and special schools available to White and Indian learners, as opposed to the poorly resourced specialised education services afforded to children from other races (i.e., African and Coloured) (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000).

Such a system excluded African learners from an education system that afforded other learners access to quality education both in mainstream and specialised education schools. The lack of quality education in both mainstream and specialised educational services, stemming from the apartheid regime’s deliberate withholding of adequate resources and financial support from African schools, further diminished the ability of individuals to envision a hopeful future, as the education provided was primarily designed to prepare learners for unskilled labour (Daniels, 2010; Donohue & Bornman, 2014). The education system's inequality was visible to citizens, necessitating change. Therefore, following the end of Apartheid as a political dispensation, the South African Democratic government “addressed the diversity in the learner population and provided a continuum of educational support” (Engelbrecht, 2020, p. 20). The diversity of the learner population was addressed by appointing the National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training

(NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) (DoE, 1997) to explore the challenges and the pitfalls of the exclusive education system of Apartheid.

2.2.1) *The NCSNET and NCESS Implementing the Education White Paper 6*

The NCSNET and the NCESS were composed of various individuals who were affected by the exclusionary practices of the apartheid education system. This group included parents of learners with barriers to learning and development who were denied access to quality education, activists, and other professionals (Daniels, 2010). There was a need for the inclusion of all these people because the former system affected not only the group of underprivileged learners (i.e., African and Coloured) in mainstream education and specialised schools, but it also had an impact on people surrounding and supporting these learners (e.g., parents). As the NCSNET and NCESS included people of different backgrounds, skills and specialties, research was conducted, and a consensus was reached to advocate for the implementation of inclusive education in South African schools (Daniels, 2010; DoE, 1997; Mohangi & Berger, 2015). Once consensus was reached between the NCSNET, NCESS, and other stakeholders (DoE, 2001), the Education White Paper 6 was gazetted in July 2001 in an attempt to address the exclusions of the Apartheid education system by adopting a more holistic approach to ensure equity in the education system.

This was the birth of a cohesive system that allowed for community collaboration, the inclusion of children with barriers to learning and development in mainstream schools, supportive approaches, funding strategies, inclusive training and education, quality education for every learner, and the promotion of rights and responsibilities for all those within the education system (Daniels, 2010; DoE, 2001; Engelbrecht, 2004). Further developments were made, with the introduction of the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014) rooted in White Paper 6 to specifically focus on inclusivity of learners with learning barriers and the role that different stakeholders can play to make inclusive education possible.

2.2.2) Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS Policy)

The SIAS policy emanates from the Education White Paper 6, which advocates for inclusive education and training within the school environment, and was introduced by the Department of Basic Education in 2014. The SIAS policy provides an extensive discussion of the concept of inclusive education, with the major thrust of this discussion asserting that inclusive education ensures equality, high-quality education, and support for every learner regardless of their varying learning abilities, while accommodating learners with learning barriers (DoBE, 2014). Specifically, and in practical terms, the SIAS policy also outlines the procedures for identification and support within the school environment, while clarifying the roles of the various support teams that facilitate the effective implementation of the policy (DoBE, 2014). Teachers serve as the cornerstone of this process of implementing the policy and are entrusted with the frontline responsibilities of screening, identifying, assessing, and supporting learners with diverse learning needs (DoBE, 2014). Their critical task involves gathering comprehensive information about struggling learners and developing appropriate interventions tailored to address specific skill gaps (DoBE, 2014). This initial step is pivotal in providing assistance to learners facing learning barriers.

In addition to teachers, two other essential support teams (i.e., the SBST and DBST) make part of the SIAS policy as additional teams contributing to the inclusive education process. The SBST consists of teachers within the school who are responsible for responding to teachers' requests for assistance and developing support strategies for learners encountering learning barriers (DoBE, 2014). On the other hand, the DBST operates at the district level, based at the district office and evaluates the eligibility of requests from SBST, offers guidance regarding accommodations, and identifies learners for placement into specialised settings (DoBE, 2014). In cases of severe challenges, a district educational psychologist may be dispatched to the school by the DBST. The SBST serves as the initial point of contact for teachers seeking additional support if interventions prove insufficient, while the DBST provides more advanced assistance, facilitated by the inclusion

of educational psychologists within its composition. As the responsibilities of teachers, as outlined in the SIAS policy, were discussed, it is equally important to explore teachers' perceptions of the role of educational psychologists and the forms of support they believe these professionals can provide, thereby offering a sense of the expectations teachers hold regarding educational psychologists. Before addressing these perceptions, it is necessary to consider the role of the educational psychologist, with particular attention to the historical transition from the Apartheid-era conceptualisation of the profession to its role within a democratic South African education system.

2.3) Role of Educational Psychologists in South Africa: During Apartheid, Post-Apartheid, According to SIAS Policy, and According to Teachers

2.3.1) The Role of Educational Psychologists During Apartheid

In the past, the so-called Medical Model of Disability guided the work, roles, and responsibilities of educational psychologists and supported an education system built on segregation and exclusion (Engelbrecht, 2004; Engelbrecht, 2020; Naicker, 2007). This model required the focus to be on the learner, and the disability “within” them which required specialised support and separate schools to accommodate their needs (Engelbrecht, 2004). The role of educational psychologists was seen as that of specialists, who assisted in the diagnosis and placement of children with barriers to learning and development. In the context of Apartheid South Africa and the diagnosis and placement of children with barriers to learning and development, educational psychologists played the role of assessing children in the context of the medical model, which disregarded the social, political, and economic difficulties often faced by African children that impacted their learning and development (Engelbrecht, 2004). Thus, within the medical model, also referred to as the within-child model (Swart & Pettipher, 2005), and its focus on diagnosing and treating the disorder or disability within the child, contextual factors which could have contributed to the difficulties experienced by children, were often neglected. This resulted in these children not receiving adequate and appropriate support to address the challenges they faced.

2.3.2) *The Role of Educational Psychologists in Post-Apartheid (Democratic SA)*

The role of educational psychologists was revised post-Apartheid, and the model of practice was extended to incorporate all aspects that advocate for the educational well-being of all learners. A holistic model was introduced which incorporated both the medical and the socio-economic components of learners and how they influence their ability to do well at school (Daniels, 2010; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Motitswe, 2014). There was a shift from the individualistic approach promoted by the medical model, to a sociocultural model which resonates with Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological model. This is a more integrated model and one that goes beyond the intrinsic cognitive abilities of a learner by examining various factors that can hinder the learning and development of children (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

However, despite the introduction of the White Paper 6, there were few educational psychologists in early post-Apartheid South Africa. This conclusion is based on studies such as those by Farrell et al. (2005) and Jimerson et al. (2009), rather than formal statistical records, as such documents from that historical period could not be retrieved. Farrell et al. (2005) shared that while conducting their study, South African teachers pointed out that one educational psychologist would be expected to offer service to 17 000 learners, and this led to an ineffective outcome of their work. These findings were corroborated by Jimerson et al. (2009), who reported that in South Africa, the biggest challenge was the allocation of educational psychologists in schools with approximately "1178 educational psychologists" alongside "10 503 224 school-age children" to attend to (p. 560). This is an international study that examined the availability of educational psychologists across different countries. It appeared that other nations experienced similar shortages, with the number of educational psychologists being disproportionately low relative to the number of learners requiring support (Jimerson et al., 2009). The pattern seems to continue in South Africa as a participant in Moolla and Lazarus' (2014) study in Western Cape shared that "there are only six psychologists, one psychologist per circuit, and a circuit has 40 schools" (p. 7). Seemingly, even with the introduction of the White Paper 6 and later the SIAS policy,

allowing previously marginalised populations (particularly African learners) who were historically denied access to educational psychologists to begin accessing these essential support services, teachers were still experiencing challenges, with the dominant challenge being that of not having enough educational psychologists to attend to learners with learning barriers.

2.3.3) The Role of Educational Psychologists According to SIAS Policy

The SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014), which is the focus of the research reported in this research report, defines the role of educational psychologists within the duties of the DBSTs. The roles of educational psychologists include “decision-making around any form of support-provisioning to learners, schools, and teachers” (DoBE, 2014, p. 35). Other roles are training and mentoring of teachers, offering counselling to learners, and provision of additional support should a child be characterised as moderate or high risk to present with learning barriers in a school setting, especially in a public school considering the historical marginalisation of African learners (Hess, 2020; Melane, 2022). Educational psychologists play a vital role in promoting inclusive education by supporting learners with specific learning needs, as well as assisting those experiencing psychological or emotional challenges (DoBE, 2014). These two core areas of focus are distinct yet interconnected components of their professional practice. These align with the Health Professions Council of South Africa’s (HPCSA) guidelines for the role and training of educational psychologists. It must be noted that the DBST incorporates different professionals for referral purposes with educational psychologists being the first point of referral as they are specialists who can assess, diagnosis, and provide recommendations within the child’s context (Melane, 2022). This reflects a shift from the historical role of educational psychologists, which was largely grounded in a medical model that neglected the social, political, and economic challenges experienced by African children and how these factors impacted their learning and development to contemporary educational psychologists who take into consideration social, economic, and political factors in supporting learners at schools, as these factors also shape

the academic well-being of a learner. Now that the role of an educational psychologist has been clarified, understanding teachers' perceptions of this role will offer insights into how they interpret the educational psychologist's function within the school environment, shedding light on their expectations.

2.3.4) Teachers' Views on the Role and Support They Need from Educational Psychologists

Teachers seem to have developed different perceptions about the role and responsibilities of educational psychologists in South African schools. Research by Farrell et al. (2005), Reinke et al. (2011), as well as Thielking and Jimerson (2006) appear to suggest that teachers take a comprehensive view of the roles and responsibilities of educational psychologists in mainstream schools, which includes being up to date with present research on issues at hand, organising school group programs for learners, organising workshops for teachers to provide information about learners' welfare, inform learners' parents about their children's participation in counselling, collaboration with others outside the school, and implementation of classroom behaviour interventions. This reflects the general perception teachers have regarding the responsibilities an educational psychologist should fulfil in a mainstream school.

Conversely, teachers in Banga's (2009) study indicated through a questionnaire that educational psychologists in both mainstream and specialised school settings appear to carry out the same duties and responsibilities. Additionally, Banga (2009) noted that it was reported that specialised schools often require minimal services of educational psychologists while Bisinger (2009) emphasised how teachers of special education classrooms assert the helpfulness of educational psychologists in their classrooms, but their presence is lacking. Although teachers in specialised schools do not require frequent consultations with educational psychologists, as noted by Banga (2009), Bisinger (2009) highlights that these professionals are not always available when needed. The research studies reviewed in this section were conducted before the development of the SIAS policy in 2014. This means that,

even with the implementation of White Paper 6, from which the SIAS policy originates (DoBE, 2014), access to the services of an educational psychologist in both public mainstream schools and specialised schools was still limited.

Throughout this section a recurring theme is teachers' perceptions of the role of educational psychologists within the school environment, and how specialised schools face the same challenge as mainstream schools regarding inadequate support from educational psychologists. Due to the lack of recent research on this topic, there is limited insight into public school teachers' perceptions of the type of support educational psychologists can provide to assist them in the implementation of the SIAS policy. In light of the limited research, focus will be directed toward understanding the challenges teachers experience in implementing the SIAS policy, as well as the nature of support they require from educational psychologists. This focus is crucial, as teachers are the key drivers and dynamic agents in the successful implementation of this policy.

2.4) Challenges Faced by Teachers in Fulfilling Their Responsibilities as Outlined in the SIAS Policy

Delving deeper into teachers' responsibilities in the implementation of the SIAS policy, they are active agents in the daily management of learners who experience barriers to learning and development. As such, the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014) positions them at the top of the hierarchy in supporting learners with learning barriers. The policy assigned teachers the role to be case managers, identifying learners with learning barriers, and offering support to these learners by designing and implementing interventions to overcome their barriers (DoBE, 2014; Hess, 2020; Melane, 2022). Matolo and Rambuda (2022) reported that teachers also do assessments in which they “focus on the screening process not only on the barriers within the learners but also on their environment” (p. 13) and “provide all learners with opportunities to show what they know or do not know and what they can do or not do” (p. 14). These are the responsibilities that are assigned to teachers

within the SIAS policy. The district educational psychologist gets involved only when the interventions, including those from the SBST, are found to be ineffective (DoBE, 2014).

Teachers do not always feel thrilled to fulfill the above discussed responsibilities that the SIAS policy assigns to them as they come across challenges in the midst of trying to support learners with barriers. In an attempt to implement the SIAS policy within the school environment, three common challenges were consistently reported by teachers across various research studies. These challenges are deficiency of support and training, shortage of resources, and overcrowded classrooms (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Materechera, 2020; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). The 'once-in-a-while training' which they attend to enhance their skills in assessing and evaluating children with barriers, is reportedly not sufficient to prepare them for practical engagement in the school setting, and the support from the educational psychologists at the district is not sufficient either (Hess, 2020; Motitswe, 2014). In support of the preceding argument, Nomsa's (2020) study which unpacked rural teachers' perceptions regarding access to educational psychologists outlined that despite teachers playing their part in inclusive education, the Department of Education fails to provide services of educational psychologists. These teachers attempt to evaluate, assess, and support learners with learning barriers but they do not in turn always get the necessary support and training to fulfill these responsibilities. The issue of resources is of great concern as reported by teachers who were part of Engelbrecht et al's. (2015) study, asserting that interventions can be put into place but due to lack of resources, they become ineffective. This is related to the budget constraints faced by the DoBE, as discussed by McLaren (2017), who notes that not all the needs of schools can be met due to limited financial limitations. Furthermore, Engelbrecht et al. (2015) as well as Mfuthwana and Dreyer (2018) highlighted that teachers further reported finding it difficult to identify learners with barriers in a crowded classroom. This last point integrates all these challenges because classes at public schools tend to be crowded due to sharing limited resources at schools with teachers obligated to provide support to all learners they teach. Based on the findings from the research papers (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Hess, 2020; Materechera, 2020; Mfuthwana &

Dreyer, 2018), it appears that teachers are facing numerous challenges in effectively implementing the SIAS policy and are struggling to manage the responsibilities outlined within it.

The fewer available research articles discussed thus far reflect that support from educational psychologists was still lacking a few years into democracy, prior to the introduction of inclusive education under the SIAS policy. Teachers have continued to encounter difficulties in implementing the SIAS policy over the years following its introduction. This limited body of research highlights a gap, particularly in understanding public school teachers' perceptions of the support they need from educational psychologists to effectively carry out their responsibilities as outlined in the SIAS policy, as few studies address this crucial aspect. The emphasis is placed on public schools, as the SIAS policy aims to rectify the disparities in access to resources, striving to close the gap that has historically existed. Therefore, understanding what constitutes a public school is essential, as it provides a clear framework for categorising and defining these institutions within the context of the policy's objectives.

2.5) Defining a Public School: South African Schools Quintiles

Despite progress in the transition period and increased availability of educational psychologists in post-apartheid South Africa, access to these professionals remains noticeably unequal across different school quintiles. As highlighted by Maistry and Africa (2020), schools in the first three quintiles (categorised as public schools), receive departmental financial support and are prohibited from charging fees, making them different from the fourth and fifth quintiles where schools have discretion over fees and fundraising initiatives to supplement their budgets and maintain standards. While schools classified as quintiles 1, 2, and 3 rely entirely on departmental assistance and categorised as public schools, White and Van Dyk (2019) note that some fourth and fifth quintiles schools receive minimal public funding. Moreover, Maistry and Africa (2020) elaborate that these latter schools enjoy full autonomy in procuring external services, including hiring an educational

psychologist or outsourcing one to work with the school, as their budgets are internally determined rather than dictated by the government. The Department of Basic Education (2014), as outlined in the SIAS policy, stipulates that public schools in the lowest three quintiles may be assigned an educational psychologist if needed, highlighting disparities in access between quintiles.

The system of quintiles is supported by the South African Schools Act of 1996, through the implementation of provision of a “uniform system for the organisation, governance, and funding of public schools” in the hopes of leaving no learner behind (Maithufi, 1997, p. 5). Schools in the fourth and fifth quintiles have greater flexibility and financial autonomy compared to those in the lowest three quintiles, which are subject to stricter departmental oversight. It is important to note that the Department of Basic Education operates within a constrained budget, and the allocated funds may not always be sufficient to address all the emerging needs of schools (McLaren, 2017). For instance, while it may not be feasible to assign an educational psychologist to every individual school, the department deploys district-based psychologists to ensure that schools have access to psychological and educational support services as needed (DoBE, 2014). This arrangement helps provide essential support and promotes learner well-being across the district. Another important factor to consider, as highlighted by Mampane (2023), is the limited number of registered educational psychologists in South Africa. According to Mampane’s (2023) study, only 1 672 educational psychologists were registered with the HPCSA in 2023. As a result, even if the DoBE were to increase its budget for learner support services, it is unlikely that every school would have access to the services of an educational psychologist, given the limited number of professionals available to adequately meet the diverse and increasing needs of learners in public schools across the country. Research focusing on teachers working within the first three quintiles which are categorised as public schools, will provide strategies for effectively addressing the various challenges associated with the implementation of the SIAS policy that were discussed throughout this paper. Given all that has been discussed, Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Theory is seen as the befitting theoretical framework for the

chosen research topic because of its multi-system nature (i.e., holistic understanding of the core individual) and its alignment with the various systems (i.e., teams) referenced in the SIAS policy. This theoretical framework will be utilised to contextualise public school teachers' perceptions regarding the support they need from educational psychologists to implement the SIAS policy.

2.6) Theoretical Framework: Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Theory views an individual, not in isolation, but as being rooted in a context made up of different layers, referred to as systems. Bronfenbrenner (1986) attests that a person is at the core of their lives, but they are surrounded by other different dimensions that shape their lives. The different dimensions that are referred to, in the context of Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) Bio-Ecological Theory, include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem.

The microsystem refers to the basic relationships of the person with their immediate environment and this system includes family, school, neighbours, and so forth, with the mesosystem referring to the connections between these structures of the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Within the scope of this research study, a teacher's microsystems are assumed to include the learners they teach, the parents of these children, and other teachers. The mesosystem would reflect the relationships between these microsystems, for instance, the communication between the parents and the teacher, neighbouring services and the parents, and also the communication between teachers for the development of interventions to support learners who are experiencing learning barriers.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) understands the exosystem as "external to the developing person", where the psychological functioning of the core individual "is affected not only by what happens in the environments in which they spend their time but also by what occurs in other settings" with which they are indirectly connected (p. 723). In the context of this research study, this system is assumed to include the DoBE and provision of resources which includes availing an educational psychologist to support teachers to successfully

implement interventions to support learners with learning barriers. Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualised the macrosystem as “patterns of ideology and organisation of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture” (p. 8) while the chronosystem incorporates historical events, including stability and change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). For the purpose of this study, the macrosystem is also likely to include the broader South African education system including policies and legislation implemented by the Department of Basic Education. The SIAS policy will be primarily emphasised since the study is centered around it, with the chronosystem examining the concept of inclusive education in South Africa over time, documenting the developments and occurrences that shaped the current state of the ideology.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) expanded the Bio-Ecological Theory by introducing proximal processes and person characteristics, two dimensions that were later integrated into the theory. Proximal processes, which is the first dimension, refer to the reciprocal interactions between the core individual and the previously discussed systems, which play a crucial role in the functioning and well-being of the person. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). This would refer to the interaction between the teacher and the already discussed systems for the better implementation of the SIAS policy. Proximal processes “are considered the main force promoting development” through the various interactions the core individual has with all other systems, with regular interaction fostering healthy development (Merçon-Vargas et al., 2020, p. 322). The second dimension is person characteristics, composed of demand characteristics, resource characteristics, and force characteristics (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The focus will be on person characteristics which refer to innate capabilities, mental functioning, and experience (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). In the context of this study, this dimension would refer to teachers' years of experience, teaching skills, commitment, and training which could impact the way in which teachers understand the SIAS policy and feel competent in implementing it. All the person characteristics mentioned will influence how teachers interact with the various systems, shaping their engagement with the environment around them.

In the broader context, Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Theory supports inclusive education in all its aspects as it looks not only at learners and the difficulties within them that can impact their learning, but also at contextual factors which may pose a barrier to their development and learning. In the context of this study, the chosen theoretical framework assists us in understanding teachers and educational psychologists as stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa, albeit in different systems given their responsibilities and roles as conceptualised by the SIAS-policy (DoBE, 2014).

2.7) Summary of the Chapter

This chapter outlines the transformative journey of South Africa's education system, moving from the segregation of the Apartheid era towards establishing inclusion in schools. While progress has been made, teachers still perceive a gap that must be addressed for effective implementation of the SIAS policy. This inclusive education initiative positions teachers as key to identifying and assisting learners with barriers to learning. Despite the evolving role of educational psychologists over time, their presence in schools remains notably scarce. This reintroduces the issue of limited access to resources affecting SIAS policy implementation. The adopted theoretical framework which is Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Theory comprehensively defines the roles of teachers and other stakeholders. It provides insight into how these relationships shape experiences with inclusive education within the school environment.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1) Overview of the Chapter

This chapter will provide an overview of the research design and methodology for the study reported in this research report. Given the multifaceted nature of research, which involves various components, the research design and approach will be explained in detail. This includes outlining the sample selection process and techniques, instruments chosen for data collection, procedural steps, ethical considerations, and data analysis methods. Furthermore, the focus will also be on how the quality of the study was enhanced, specifically in terms of credibility and transferability. The goal is to provide comprehensive transparency regarding how the study was conducted and findings derived.

3.2) Research Design and Method

This study is rooted within an interpretivist paradigm which promotes a subjective worldview and is based on the assumption that human beings are diverse and inherently embedded within specific social and contextual realities. The paradigm acknowledges the depth and variety in humans' experiences and interpretations of the world (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Pham, 2018). The emphasis is on the authenticity of human experiences. As Pham (2018) explains, there is an opportunity for "the researcher to investigate and prompt things that we cannot observe, researchers can probe an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives" (p. 4). An interpretivist paradigm aligned with the aim of the study reported in this research report in that the study was focused on the subjective perceptions and experiences of township teachers in relation to the support they need from educational psychologists.

This study was particularly interested in understanding these teachers' experiences and perceptions in relation to implementing and abiding by the SIAS policy within their under-resourced school environment. As per the interpretivist paradigm's assumption of prioritising unique experiences (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020), each township teacher's experience was assumed to be unique in how they perceive and interpret the expectations

outlined in the SIAS policy, as well as the kind of support they need from educational psychologists.

For further exploration of the topic at hand, an exploratory research design was employed. Hunter et al. (2019) explain that “explorative research examines a phenomenon of interest, rather than simply observing and recording incidents of the phenomenon” (p. 2). The phenomenon of interest, which is township teachers’ perceptions regarding the support they need from educational psychologists to implement the SIAS policy, focus on the depth of their experiences rather than quantifying and recording the prevalence of their experiences. Township teachers’ perceptions are the phenomena of interest, and this speaks to description of experience. Therefore, in conducting the study, the idea was that teachers would be sharing their perceptions and experiences about the support they needed from educational psychologists to implement the SIAS-policy in assessing and supporting learners with learning barrier/s in under-resourced township schools they work in. In conclusion, the qualitative research method was considered most suitable, as it aligns with the chosen paradigm in its advocacy for subjectivity, interpretation, and exploration of different human experiences and perceptions (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

3.3) Sample and Sampling

Purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, was utilised in the selection of participants. Purposive sampling selects a sample based on criteria with the researcher “having a prior purpose in mind” (Alvi, 2016, p. 30). The inclusion and exclusion criteria clearly defined the sample, emphasising that participants should be teachers from under-resourced, township public schools in the Free State province, specifically within the Fezile Dabi District. These teachers must have been involved in assessing and developing interventions for learners identified as experiencing barriers to learning. In this study, township public schools refer to schools classified within quintiles 1 to 3, as all public schools in the Fezile Dabi District fall within these quintile ranges (NDoBE, 2023).

The sample was made up of teachers from under-resourced township public schools in the Free State province within the Fezile Dabi District. Two schools, a primary school and a high school, were initially approached due to the researchers' familiarity with the teachers at these institutions. The element of familiarity comes from the researcher sharing a common space with the study participants, as they all reside in the same town. Additionally, some participants were the former researcher's teachers during her primary and high school years. Although other schools in the area were considered, the familiarity with the teachers at these two schools facilitated easier access to participants, which in turn allowed for smoother data collection. The selection of a primary and a secondary school was based solely on the availability of study participants. As a result, the researcher prioritised these schools for participant selection and data collection. Furthermore, the researcher's firsthand knowledge of the challenges these schools face in implementing the SIAS policy, as the researcher had experienced the adverse effects of the unsuccessful implementation of the SIAS policy in both schools, contributed to the decision to focus on these schools, as they were particularly relevant to the research topic. As a result, these schools were approached first. Table 3.1 below provides details of the research participants.

Table 3.1

Participants demographic information

Participant	Gender	Title	Years of teaching	Currently Teaching Grade
P1	Female	High School SBST coordinator	21 Years	Grade 8 & 9
P2	Female	Senior Phase Teacher	13 Years	Grade 8 & 9
P3	Female	FET Phase Teacher	3 years	Grade 10 to 12

P4	Female	Primary School SBST Member	32 years	Grade 1
P5	Male	Primary School SBST coordinator	7 years	Grade 3
P6	Female	Foundation Phase Teacher	6 years	Grade R
P7	Male	Intermediate Phase Teacher	12 years	Grade 4 and 5

The primary school that participants came from is categorised as quintile 3 by the Department of Education, while the high school where participants came from is classified as quintile 1. The study participants were all teachers, with three of them being members of the SBST. Their teaching experience ranges from 3 to 32 years, and they teach across all educational phases, from the Foundation Phase to the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. The sample size was based on the achievement of data saturation which is the stage at which the researcher recognises that participants have provided comprehensive and sufficient data to address the research questions, with no new insight into the research topic arising (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In the planning stage of the study, it was anticipated that eight to nine participants would be suitable, with participants selected from three different public schools within the Fezile Dabi District in the Free State for data collection. However, because the participants at the two schools initially approached were readily available and the familiarity with the participants facilitated easy access, other schools were therefore excluded from the study. Data collection was terminated after the interview with the seventh participant as the researcher identified that data saturation had been reached.

3.4) Research Instrument

Data was gathered through semi-structured one-on-one interviews with the aid of a semi-structured interview schedule (see **Appendix A: Interview Schedule**). Semi-structured interviews and interview schedules are widely used in qualitative research as they give the interview a form of direction as there are few questions set out to drive the interview process, but at the same time allows the participants to be flexible by explaining further and elaborating on their perceptions and experiences (Kallio et al., 2016). As there is a research question that needs to be answered, there were related interview questions that were included in the interview schedule and drove the interview process. Specifically, there were eleven questions in the interview schedule, and those questions directed the interview process, with study participants given the freedom to expand on their responses to each question. Interviews were conducted at a place chosen by the participants, and they were introduced to the interview questions on the day of the interview when they went through them together with the researcher. All interviews took place at the respective schools of each participant. Data saturation determined when to stop the interview process hence only seven interviews were conducted (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

3.5) Procedure

Two public schools situated within an under-resourced township in the Free State province within the Fezile Dabi District were approached. A provisional and tentative consent was requested from the principals of these schools to approach eligible teachers in their schools to interview. This process was carried out informally as a means of informing school principals in advance of the upcoming research activities and this was done through verbally explaining the research and providing the school principals with an information sheet detailing the research and expectations for sharing with the teachers. However, before formal permission from the principals of these schools was obtained, approval had to be obtained from the Free State Department of Education to conduct research in public schools within their province. During correspondence with the Free State Department of Education,

the researcher submitted the research proposal, an information sheet (see **Appendix B: Free State Department of Education Information Sheet**), and a research application form (see **Appendix C: Research Application Form**) requesting them to provide written consent allowing the research to be conducted in the chosen schools. Upon receiving gatekeeper's permission (see **Appendix D: Gatekeeper's Permission- Free State Department of Education**) from the Free State Department of Education, the principals of the two schools were contacted via email and they were now formally provided with an information sheet (see **Appendix E: Principal Information Sheet**) and a consent form to provide written consent for access to eligible teachers in their schools. Permission was granted from both schools and gatekeeper's permission (see **Appendix F: Gatekeeper's Permission- School Principals**) was later sent by the school principals.

The participant information sheet outlined all the objectives of the study, while the consent form detailed the ethical considerations involved. Upon receiving gatekeepers' permission, the letters were submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand Internal Ethics Committee – Non-Medical together with the research proposal. After receiving ethical clearance and an ethics certificate (see **Appendix G: Ethics Certificate**) was obtained, data collection started. Interviews were scheduled with three teachers in the high school and four teachers in the primary school. Each study participant was also provided with a participant information sheet (see **Appendix H: Participant Information Sheet**), as well as consent forms (see **Appendix I: Participant Interview Consent Form**) as they were required to provide informed and written consent to partake in the study. Another consent form was given to each teacher to provide written consent for being audio recorded (see **Appendix J: Participant Interview Audio Recording Consent Form**). The interviews were conducted one-on-one and in person, at a time and location that was preferred by the teachers. The interviews were conducted during school hours at the participants' respective schools. A total of seven interviews were carried out: three at the high school and four at the primary school. However, if need be and requested by the teachers, they had the flexibility to opt for

online or telephonic interviews. Each interview was scheduled to last for about 45-60 minutes, and they were audio-recorded.

After data collection was finalised, the original research supervisor (i.e., Ms Adri Vorster) resigned from the University of the Witwatersrand, and a new research supervisor (i.e., Dr Nicholas Munro) was assigned to supervise the final stages of the research project (i.e., the data analysis and final research report write-up phase). Ms Adri Vorster's name therefore appears on all study documents (e.g., participant information sheet, ethics certificate – see Appendices) as she was the relevant point of contact for participants while data collection for the study was unfolding.

3.6) Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Internal Ethics Committee – Non-Medical (see **Appendix G: Ethics Certificate**). Since the research participants were teachers of legal age with the autonomy to consent to the study, and the study's content did not involve any potentially humiliating or deceptive activities, this population was not considered vulnerable or at risk of harm. Therefore, the research was deemed to pose a low level of risk.

In conducting the research, the first step was honouring informed consent which Dooly et al. (2017) regards as a “full disclosure of any anticipated risks to the subjects, whether the respondents will be compensated in any way, the methodology to be used and data treatment” (p. 353). Informed and written consent were obtained from all teachers who were part of the research sample. Study participants were informed that no risks were anticipated or foreseen in relation to their participation, nor any benefits to taking part in the study. They were also made aware of the purpose of the study, the methodology, and the analysis of data.

Study participants were made aware that their involvement in the study was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any given time (Dooly et al., 2017). Withdrawal from the study does not mean the discontinuation of participation only, it also

includes the withdrawal of the already provided data should they request this. They were also informed that they can withdraw without any penalty to themselves.

Other ethical considerations included anonymity and confidentiality (Dooly et al., 2017). Anonymity cannot fully be assured since the interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face; however, although quotes from the interviews were organised into themes, and these formed the foundation of the findings chapter, no personal identifying information was published as a simple naming system using codes from P1 to P7 was implemented to replace real names. Confidentiality was guaranteed as the collected data was kept safe on a password-protected computer once transcribed and was only shared with the research supervisor. To maintain anonymity, no identifying information that could potentially reveal the participants' identities was included in the discussion of the results.

Since each interview was audio recorded, consent to record the interviews was obtained from participants. The interview sessions were recorded using an additional phone. The recordings were discarded from the phone later that day after they had been transferred to a safe password-protected folder on the researcher's laptop.

After transcription, the researcher went through the transcription scripts again to check if the words of the participants were captured correctly, and no identifying information was included. Participants were made aware that once the full report has been compiled and submitted, access to the findings of the study, and a summary of the study will be made available upon request for them to see how all the ethical considerations were applied, and their identities were kept anonymous throughout. Also, the collected data will be kept for future research to be used as secondary data with the permission of the participants.

Finally, participants were made aware that the study's findings would be compiled into a research report and stored in the WITS Institutional Repository on WIReDSpace, where electronic copies of all research reports, research report, and theses are maintained. The study's findings may also be published as a book chapter, peer-reviewed journal article, or presented at a conference.

3.7) Data Analysis

In qualitative research, the data that the researcher generates (e.g., through interviews) needs to be given meaning, and for this study, reflexive thematic analysis was the selected data analysis method. This method is widely used across qualitative studies, “centering researcher subjectivity, organic and recursive coding processes, and the importance of deep reflection on, and engagement with data” (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 593). In addition, reflexive thematic analysis is theoretically and epistemologically flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2019) and can therefore be used in research that is theoretically grounded in Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Systems Theory and an interpretative paradigm. The researcher is viewed as a data analyst, actively engaging with the data as the codes are refined, with the ultimate goal of deriving meaningful insights. The data is influenced by the reflective nature of the researcher. Terry et al. (2017) refer to codes as evidence that later form themes. These codes are phrases that are identified across study participants and later formed into themes. Common phrases were identified and extracted from the data collected from the township teachers who were interviewed, and themes were formed in accordance with answering the research question. Codes which were identified from the interview transcripts constituted thoughts, ideas, and common experiences between the study participants. The commonality led to the development of themes which were composed of common experiences of the study participants with relation to the SIAS-policy. Braun and Clarke (2019) define themes as “stories about particular patterns of shared meaning across the dataset” (p. 592). The data analysis process was not without challenges, as it required continuous refinement and adjustment of themes throughout. This iterative approach was essential to ensure that the themes accurately reflected the depth and complexity of the participants' responses. Therefore, reflexive thematic analysis enabled the identification and development of common themes, providing structure to the data while preserving its original meaning (Clarke et al., 2015). Reflexive thematic analysis produces

complex and rich data, and this ties in with the chosen research design and method, advocating for subjectivity and depth.

3.8) Enhancing the Quality of the Research

This section examines how the researcher enhanced the quality of the study, focusing on two key aspects: credibility and transferability.

3.8.1) *Credibility of the Study*

Various methods are used in qualitative research to ensure the credibility of the study, with reflexivity being one of the key strategies for verifying the credibility of the study (Yadav, 2022). Palaganas et al. (2017) understand reflexivity to be the acknowledgement of the researcher on how the research could have brought a change in them and how the researcher might have influenced the research and the data. The researcher is a thinking being who has experiences that shape how one sees life, and this could have an influence on the research process. The researcher needs to acknowledge these feelings and how their presence and standpoint could have shaped how questions were compiled and asked and how data was analysed (Von Unger, 2021). To maintain reflexivity, the researcher kept a small diary to write down feelings and thoughts that were evoked during each interview, feelings and thoughts which could have influenced each interview process.

Considering that most research participants had previously interacted with the researcher in a shared space, this allowed for an easy interview process from recruiting participants through the end of data collection. Furthermore, the researcher shares a common space with the study participants, as they all reside in the same town. Additionally, some participants were the researcher's former teachers during her primary and high school years. Rapport, which Prior (2018) defines as the process of building a relationship and closeness with interview subjects while creating a safe space, had already been established due to previous encounters. This could have influenced the interview process, influencing both the ease of asking questions and the formulation of the research questions. In developing the research questions, there were already preconceived ideas because the

researcher was familiar with and had been part of the research site environments. With the researcher having experienced the adverse effects of the unsuccessful implementation of the SIAS policy in both schools where the study participants are employed, the researcher approached the development of interview questions with preconceived notions about how the interviews might unfold. This prior experience influenced both the formulation of the questions and the way they were asked.

Another key consideration is the researcher's positionality as a student educational psychologist, which may have influenced the approach used in formulating and asking questions during the interviews. Furthermore, the researcher's perspective could have affected the interpretation and analysis of the data, as their professional lens might have shaped the identification and prioritisation of themes or patterns. An additional element of positionality was considered, specifically the researcher's prior familiarity with the research participants and firsthand experience of the research sites. This positionality may have influenced the depth of the analysis, potentially shaping the interpretation of the findings to place greater emphasis on participants' quotes that highlighted their struggles in implementing the SIAS policy, amplifying voices that are often overlooked, while comparatively underemphasising other important insights provided by the participants. A positive aspect of qualitative research is that it allows for recognition of all experiences, including those of the researcher through reflexivity. This ties into the employed research design and method of this study, which advocates for embracing diverse subjective experiences.

3.8.2) *Transferability of the Findings*

Transferability refers to the degree to which study findings can be applied to other populations or settings (Ahmed, 2024). In qualitative research, various methods are employed to assess transferability, with thick description being one of those methods. Ahmed (2024) describes thick description as provision of "detailed contextual information to enable readers to assess the transferability of findings" (p. 2). As the details of the

participants and the context in which they are situated are outlined in **3.3) Sample and Sampling**, the level of transferability of the findings can be assessed based on these two aspects. It is evident that the context is specific to the study participants, which influences the extent to which the findings can be applicable to other settings, but this does not limit the transferability of the findings to individuals who can identify with the study participants.

3.9) Summary of the Chapter

For any research project, it is crucial to detail the steps taken in conducting the study. This research report utilised an interpretivist research design to explore the topic in depth. An exploratory approach was adopted to delve deeper into the subject matter. Purposive sampling was employed since there were specific criteria for the sample: teachers from under-resourced public schools in townships who had assessed and developed interventions for learners with identified learning barriers. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the research instrument, aligning with the research design's focus on subjectivity and understanding experiences in their natural form. The research commenced after receiving an ethics certificate from the Witwatersrand Internal Ethics Committee - Non-Medical. Ethical considerations included informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time. A comprehensive analysis was conducted using reflexive thematic data analysis, which derived meaning from the data through theme development. To enhance the quality of the research, credibility and transferability were the two methods employed.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1) Overview of the Chapter

This chapter focuses on presenting the findings with the intention of addressing the research question. Four key themes, derived from the transcribed interviews conducted with township teachers who participated in this study, will be presented. These themes were developed in an effort to understand study participants' perceptions of the support they require from educational psychologists in implementing the SIAS policy. The four presented themes in this chapter are: (1) The SIAS policy: “A great policy”, but difficult to implement; (2) Free State DBST (FSDBST) inefficiencies obstruct the implementation of the SIAS policy; (3) Bridging the Gap: Turning to External Support for DBST Shortcomings; and (4) Alleviating the Burden: Calling for Onsite Educational Psychologist for SIAS Policy Implementation. These four themes are summarised in Table 4.1 below. As the four themes were developed from codes which relate to what the study participants said, selected extracts in the form of quotes from participants are included throughout this chapter to provide support for and evidence of the themes.

Table 4.1

Themes and Subthemes generated from the data

Themes	Subthemes
1. The SIAS policy: “A great policy”, but difficult to implement	1.1 Positive Perceptions: “It is a great policy”
	1.2 Negative Experiences: A difficult policy to implement
2. Free State DBST (FSDBST) inefficiencies obstruct the implementation of the SIAS policy	2.1 Mismanagement of Referral Documentation
	2.2 Delayed or Lack of Response to Referrals
	2.3 Shortage of Educational Psychologists
	2.4 Insufficient Resources within the DBST

3. Bridging the Gap: Turning to External Support for DBST Shortcomings	3.1 Alternative Measures: Navigating Academic Challenges
	3.2 Alternative Measures: Navigating Psychological and Social Challenges
	3.3 Alternative Measures: Requesting Parental Support
4. Alleviating the Burden: Calling for Onsite Educational Psychologist for SIAS Policy Implementation	4.1 Immediate Access to Services of an Educational Psychologist
	4.2 Workshops for Teachers
	4.3 Engage with Learners and Parents

4.2) Theme 1: The SIAS policy: “A great policy”, but difficult to implement

This theme focuses on exploring study participants' perceptions and experiences of the SIAS policy in greater depth. Since people have unique experiences, it was valuable to gather individual perspectives from study participants, as each may interpret and perceive the SIAS policy differently. It is also important to note that teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the SIAS policy are influenced by their positionality, as the study participants were teachers, some of whom were also members of the SBST. Being part of the SBST involves responsibilities that differ from those of a teacher who is referring a learner to the SBST. Although the study participants may share a general understanding of the SIAS policy, their views on its practical application differ due to their experiences and positionality. This theme includes two subthemes: Positive Perceptions: “It is a great policy” and Negative Experiences: A difficult policy to implement, highlighting that while the policy has positive aspects, it also presents challenges.

Subtheme 1.1: Positive Perceptions: “It is a great policy”

This subtheme explores the positive perceptions the study participants have regarding the SIAS policy. The focus here is to examine the factors that drive the township

teachers who participated in this study to fulfill their responsibilities as outlined in the SIAS policy. There must be motivating aspects within the policy that encourage township teachers to remain involved and dedicated to its implementation. P5 indicated that, “it is a great policy” with P1 saying, “SIAS is a solution. It says no learner should be left behind just because they are struggling to comprehend a particular topic in the classroom”. P6 supported the view that SIAS is a great policy by stating that,

“It is an informative policy that helps with learners who have barriers to learning. If a teacher is well trained and informed about the policy, they are able to accommodate and support learners with barriers to learning in their classroom”.

Overall, it appeared that the township teachers who participated in this study viewed the SIAS policy as a framework aimed at providing solutions for learners experiencing barriers to learning. Furthermore, the study participants view the policy as providing foundational principles on how teachers can accommodate learners facing barriers to learning within the classroom setting. P4 also highlighted the environmental and socioeconomic circumstances of learners at township schools, indicating that, “most of our parents do not have the financial means”, and the SIAS policy provides hope as its goal is to ensure that learners receive the necessary support regardless of their financial means to access this help. As such, the township teachers who participated in this study view the policy as a solution and effective initiative designed to address the unique needs of learners. It is imperative to highlight that, despite the difficulty in implementing the policy, as will be discussed in the following subtheme, the township teachers who participated in this study continue to value the policy and acknowledge its positive impact on promoting a more inclusive environment within the classroom setting.

Subtheme 1.2: Negative Experiences: A difficult policy to implement

This subtheme explores the negative experiences of township teachers regarding the SIAS policy. There exists a relationship between the positive and negative aspects of the

policy; thus, while there are commendable elements, township teachers who participated in this study perceive that it has introduced an additional layer of responsibility, which they view as an additional burden. The challenges of implementing the SIAS policy appear to have a significant emotional impact on the township teachers in this study, with those serving on the SBST experiencing even greater emotional strain. A sense of frustration and perceived incompetence emerged as the study participants who made part of the SBST discussed the challenges associated with their roles. This sentiment is reflected in the words of a High School SBST coordinator (P1), who expressed,

“Yho (deep sigh). It is frustrating. It is frustrating because the expectation from the district office is that 1,2 and 3 should be completed within this time frame. When you look at the practicality of what is being expected, considering that I also have to do my responsibilities as a teacher, I get around like I am hitting a brick wall. Especially because I am the coordinator, that’s even worse because I always find myself in the middle of everything”.

This frustration is endorsed by a Primary School SBST coordinator (i.e., P5), who struggles to balance the responsibilities of being a teacher with those of a coordinator. P5 contends that,

“You need to attend workshops... attend meetings, and those things are time consuming. Sometimes the meeting is not around here, you need to travel. When schools close, I am left behind with curriculum. You’ll find that I have covered 80% of the curriculum and 20% still needs to be completed. When it comes to whatever that is SBST related, it all goes to the coordinator”.

The frustration is not limited to the SBST members as other township teachers who participated in the study also shared their experience of emotional strain as they strive to provide support to learners with barriers to learning. P3 expressed that, “SIAS is a lot of

work, on top of that, there is work we need to do as teachers". On the element of the implementation of individual support plan, P2 went on to say,

"Hhay!!! We are trying. Sometimes I just feel so tired. When I get home, I just want to rest, with no noise. Sometimes I get frustrated to a point where I zone out when I see people. I just get annoyed. Hence there is this saying that teachers have anger, we don't have anger, we are tired".

P7 highlighted the practicality of providing individual support in the context of large class sizes, stating that,

"In real life, it's not possible to provide individual support in the way it should be done. You have 40 learners. You're tired and can only focus on one, giving them the most attention. Meanwhile, there are 5 or 10 other children in the class struggling".

Whether part of the SBST or not, it is evident that the township teachers who participated in this study feel overwhelmed. The study participants shared that the challenges in the classroom vary widely, encompassing both scholastic and psychosocial issues. The various cases shared by the township teachers who participated in the study revealed the significant level of distress they experience in supporting and accommodating learners with diverse needs, creating a palpable sense of emotion in the room. Common scholastic challenges shared across all study participants include comprehension difficulties, sentence construction, word pronunciation, and reading skills with psychosocial challenges including peer pressure, child-headed households, neglect, abuse, witnessing parental violence, and anger issues. Addressing these psychosocial challenges appears to take a greater emotional toll on most of the study participants compared to managing scholastic difficulties. This was practically demonstrated on the day of the first scheduled interview, which had to be rescheduled due to unforeseen circumstances that the High School SBST coordinator (P1) needed to attend to.

To provide some context, there was an accident on a Saturday that resulted in the tragic loss of learners who went on a trip for an event, where the vehicle rolled over. On the Monday of the interview, the High School SBST coordinator had to attend to the learners involved in the accident. She visited the hospital and the families of the affected learners to gather information for the school regarding how many learners were hospitalised and how many had passed away. She was in tears and apologised for having to cancel the interview in order to make arrangements for the memorial service. While we were still discussing this tragedy, she was called to address a behavioral incident involving students who were fighting. Despite the weight of the day, P1 composed herself and attended to this urgent matter. As P1 mentioned, all of these are part of her responsibilities as an SBST coordinator. While township teachers who participated in this study still recognise the value of the SIAS policy, they feel the weight of the responsibilities that come with its implementation.

4.3) Theme 2: Free State DBST (FSDBST) inefficiencies obstruct the implementation of the SIAS policy

With the SIAS policy already implemented in schools, this theme explores how the inefficiencies of the FSDBST are regarded by the participants as hindering the effective implementation of the SIAS policy in the township schools where the participants are employed. Although various teams are intended to collaborate for the successful implementation of the policy, township teachers who participated in this study feel that they are fulfilling their responsibilities within the school environment, while the FSDBST is not adequately fulfilling its role. The study participants believe that inclusivity has not been fully achieved due to insufficient support from the FSDBST. The sentiment is that they are meeting their obligations, whereas the FSDBST does not adequately support them, hindering the successful and beneficial implementation of the SIAS policy for learners requiring additional support. Four primary challenges were reported by the township teachers who participated in this study, and these challenges reflected inefficiencies in the FSDBST. In conveying these challenges to the researcher, the township teachers who were

interviewed expressed feelings of exhaustion and helplessness. The primary challenges shared by the township teachers include Mismanagement of Referral Documentation, Delayed or Lack of Response to Referrals, Shortage of Educational Psychologists, and Insufficient Resources within the FSDBST. Each challenge is conceptualised as a subtheme and explored in detail below. The aim is to provide context and the personal experiences of each township teacher, thereby expanding on the inefficiencies of the FSDBST, as reportedly experienced by the participants.

Subtheme 2.1: Mismanagement of Referral Documentation

The first subtheme highlights the ways in which the FSDBST is reported to mismanage referral documentations. Participants contended that they prepare the necessary documents for referral to the FSDBST, but sometimes these documents go missing. For context, P2 mentioned that,

“We don’t do copies of the submitted documents. When an enquiry was made to the DBST about the referral, the response was ‘can you please send the documents again’. If you were to see what we submit, it becomes a thick document. Hhay! Imagine compiling all that again”.

Adding to the above, P4 said, “it has been two years! This child should have been assessed by now. We had to complete the Student Needs Assessment (SNA) again”. The township teachers who participated in the study asserted that completing the SNA and all relevant documents is mandatory as it is standard procedure when doing a referral, and because new information may have emerged, and additional interventions could have been implemented throughout the year, this makes the previously submitted SNA no longer relevant. The teachers in this study uttered their frustration and hopelessness at having to recompile documents for submission to the FSDBST, as a result of the FSDBST misplacing or losing the initial referral documentation. This reflects one of the realities the township teachers encounter while working with the FSDBST to implement the SIAS policy.

The teachers deemed it necessary to clarify the referral process in order to emphasise the arduous nature of the procedure, given the multiple steps required to ensure the submission of all pertinent documents. To demonstrate the arduous nature of the referral process, P4 said,

“First term, I observe the child. I assist the child and note everything I do on the record sheet. I call in the parent to get their information and background information and add that on the child’s profile. I also provide evidence [copy of learners’ work]. I submit the documents to the SBST so that they assist with interventions”.

P1 further explained the referral process by stating that, “if an intervention proves not effective, obviously we refer the case to someone of high expertise. We complete the SNA form, then it is sent out to the DBST with other documentation”. Furthermore, P5 also made similar comments to P4 and P1, indicating that, “when a referral is made, a child’s profile is submitted. SNA is needed and all other relevant documents for submission to the District”. With all this, the township teachers who participated in this study feel that they are working tirelessly to comply with the SIAS policy in the hopes of receiving assistance for learners facing barriers to learning. However, there are times when they face the challenge of referral paperwork being lost on the FSDBST’s end and they are required to redo the referral process, thereby revealing the inefficiency of the FSDBST.

Subtheme 2.2: Delayed or Lack of Response to Referrals

The second subtheme pertains to the delays or absence of responses to referrals. After the SBST has made referrals to the FSDBST, the study participants reported a delay in receiving feedback, or sometimes no response at all. Although the participants in the study indicated that the SBST actively refers cases to the FSDBST and sends documentation to the FSDBST for review, the challenge of obtaining timely responses remains. This poses a significant challenge, as the severity of cases varies within the school setting, causing

anxiety for the teachers about how to handle situations that require immediate attention if no feedback is received. For example, P5's primary concern is,

“A learner will be experiencing challenges in the month of January, and a referral will be made, however, we would only get feedback in May. If I were to refer a learner who is suicidal, by the time I get a response, that learner would be dead”.

The township teachers who participated in this study expressed experiencing heightened frustration when referred cases are overlooked. Despite their hope for referred learners to receive the necessary support, they claimed it was disheartening to feel that their hard work goes unrecognised. Referring to the lack of response from the FSDBST regarding cases that were referred, P6 indicated that, “there are learners who we constantly talk about that they were referred several times, but they are still here. A referral has to be made again”.

In an attempt to understand the reasons behind the delay or absence of response, with a heavy sigh, P1 said, “due to the distance, maybe people who stay closer to the office are benefiting. They are able to send out a car to the district office, discuss the referred cases, and get immediate feedback”. The study participants, who are also members of the SBST, expressed that the unfortunate reality is that they, along with the teachers, are actively following the SIAS policy as they recognise how much the referred learners would benefit from the support of the FSDBST. The most significant consequence of delays or a lack of response to referrals, as reported by P5 is that “these learners feel like we are neglecting them. Some of them end up dropping out of school”. This is a disheartening reality, as the turnover of resolved cases, as reported by P7 indicates that, “only 1 in 100 learners will get the support they need. In my 12 years of teaching, I know only one referred learner who was placed at an alternative school”.

Subtheme 2.3: Shortage of Educational Psychologists

The third subtheme highlights the common issue of a shortage of educational psychologists at the district level, as experienced by the study participants. As the study

participants explained the expectations outlined in the SIAS policy documentation, they shared that when referrals are made by the SBST, the expectation is that the FSDBST will send an educational psychologist to address severe cases. Furthermore, these referrals occur only after teachers and the SBST have made every effort to implement interventions, which ultimately prove inadequate. Describing the challenges related to the shortage of educational psychologists at the district level, P1 shared, “and again, they would say that there is a shortage of psychologists”. P2 further added, stating that, “they will tell us that they have only one psychologist. How will one person be able to reach the whole of Fezile Dabi? Working with so many schools!” This issue appeared to be quite common among the study participants, as P5 also shared his experience saying, “what can we say! They say there is only one psychologist at the district office. Imagine how big our district is!”

To address this gap, the study participants shared that the FSDBST often opts to send a substitute instead of an educational psychologist. Occasionally, they might send someone who is also part of the FSDBST, but the challenge is that the individual often lacks the necessary skills to address the specific case being presented. The teachers shared their experiences, with P1 stating, “sometimes they would send a social worker, and you’ll find out that the presented case needs a person who has skills possessed by a psychologist”. P4 added and said, “they would send a learning facilitator. Children with barriers to learning are experiencing a huge challenge in our school”. Based on what the participants shared, it appears that the district tries to address the gap, but the practicality of their substitutions does not seem to benefit the schools or the referred learners. The study participants feel that the individuals they send often lack the necessary skills to address the needs of learners with barriers to learning. Additionally, in an instance where an educational psychologist was made available, the assessment results differed significantly from those provided by the teacher. P7 shared one of his experiences, saying,

“We were told that this learner has no problem. Who does the learner spend most of his time with? The teacher. I saw that the learner was struggling but after the

assessment, the feedback was 'there is nothing wrong with this child'. Who will suffer at the end of the day? The learner. Obviously, the learner will not be placed at an alternative school".

Based on the above, it appears that the shortage of educational psychologists in the district places strain on the teachers who participated in this study. They expressed that they felt they were doing their best under the circumstances, yet there is a persistent sense of disappointment in their efforts to support learners with barriers to learning, because even when an educational psychologist is sent, that educational psychologist's assessment of the problem differs from theirs.

Subtheme 2.4: Insufficient Resources within the FSDBST

The final subtheme regarding challenges faced with the FSDBST as reported by the study participants is the lack of sufficient resources to support the SBST with referred cases. The study participants believe that for the effective implementation of the SIAS policy, the FSDBST must meet the needs of referred learners, as inclusivity depends on the availability of resources to accommodate and support learners who face barriers to learning. One experience shared by the teachers involves a referral for a learner with a hearing problem referring to access to health services. Sharing her experience, P1 said,

"So, I tried to talk to inclusive section from the district, and they mentioned that they don't have facilities owned by the district office. However, I believe that if they wanted to help, they would source out. I don't know, but that's how I feel. One or two learners can be assisted per year. Rather, they would say, they don't have, they don't have facilities to provide assistance in that regard!"

While P1 addresses the issue of the lack of collaboration with health services, resulting in limited access to health facilities, P3 highlights the challenge of insufficient alternative school placements for learners based on their abilities. P3 shared the response frequently received from the FSDBST regarding alternative placements which is, "we can see that this learner

has a learning barrier, but they will tell you there is a long list. No ma'am, try to use your own discretion. Try to help the learner". P4 added saying, "they will tell you from the district that those school are full, they will put the child on the waiting list. The child will be on the waiting list until they exit the school". Based on what was shared by the study participants, access to health facilities is not the only challenge, the lack of available placements for learners in alternative schools due to an insufficient number of schools also appears to be a significant issue. The discussion regarding placement in an alternative school emerged from teachers' perception that it would be a final measure considered by the DBST, only after all other support interventions had been thoroughly explored.

The study participants stressed that these learners attend their current schools because they do not have the financial means to transfer to other schools or those that provide services like those of an educational psychologist. They further mentioned that the community is primarily composed of working-class families, which means they depend on the FSDBST for academic support. The little money that caregivers have goes towards other necessities. To illustrate this socio-economic aspect, P1 shared that,

"I feel that if parents do not have the financial means, it takes time to get hearing aids particularly from a public hospital. Unlike those who have medical aid, they source easier. Sometimes when I ask the learner if there is any progress, he would say nothing new happened during the consultation".

Another experience shared was that of P4 who said,

"I requested that the child should be taken to an optometrist, only to find out that the learner stays with his grandmother, because the mother is never home. The grandmother works as a domestic worker and only gets paid R800. Most of these learners are orphans. Grandparents look after them".

Feeling the heavy burden of these learners not having the financial means to access health services P7, said “at least in private schools, they can outsource a psychologist. Here, we merely depend on the FSDBST for support”.

The study participants noted that the socio-economic conditions of these learners further exacerbate their challenges. The study participants also feel that there is only so much one can manage, and as a result, they have observed that some teachers are starting to lose motivation due to the lack of support from the FSDBST. P4 expressed that, “our SBST is no longer functional. Right now, I am sorry to say this, but I am the only one working with the referral forms”. To add on this, P5 said “things have gotten to a point whereby when it comes to inclusivity, teachers have lost that passion for it”. The general conveyed message is seen in the words of P6 who shared that, “we do have an SBST, however, teachers seem to have lost hope because referrals are made to the FSDBST, but learners who have been referred are still here”. All the identified challenges highlight the inefficiency of the FSDBST, as the township teachers who participated in the study shared that they have lost momentum due to the lack of support they receive from the FSDBST, which has made it difficult for them to sustain their efforts effectively.

4.4) Theme 3: Bridging the Gap: Turning to External Support for DBST Shortcomings

Amid the numerous challenges encountered with the FSDBST, efforts have been made within the schools by the township teachers who participated in this study to seek support from other individuals. This third theme revolves around that concept of support, where the study participants have opted for alternative approaches to secure the assistance necessary for learners facing barriers to learning (i.e., bridging the gap). Facing issues ranging from academic to psychosocial concerns, the study participants have resorted to finding external support to lessen the academic and psychosocial burdens they face without help from the FSDBST. This theme includes three subthemes: the first one is Alternative Measures: Navigating Academic Challenges, the second is titled Alternative Measures:

Navigating Psychological and Social Challenges, and the last one is Alternative Measures: Requesting Parental Support.

Subtheme 3.1: Alternative Measures: Navigating Academic Challenges

In navigating scholastic challenges such as comprehension difficulties, sentence construction, word pronunciation, and reading skills, as these challenges were commonly reported across the study participants, the township teachers who participated in the study have sought additional support to better assist learners as individual cases arise. As noted by the study participants, the FSDBST serves as their initial point of contact for severe cases, limited assistance has prompted them to seek other sources of support. To address academic challenges, the study participants have turned to both internal and external resources. Steps taken, as shared by P1 include utilising the services of the subject advisor, as P1 further explained “yho...fortunately, fortunately the subject advisor, it is one of the people I relate with. I would call and ask in this situation, what should I do”. P4 further added, stating that,

“I asked the grandmother to take the child to the local clinic, and they said the child has an eye infection then he was given eye drops. I did not see any improvement. I even asked the grandmother if she was doing as instructed and she said yes”.

The underlying idea is that the local clinic offers support for health issues that may contribute to academic gaps, which can ultimately lead to academic challenges for the learner. For further support P7 shared that, “we come together as teachers who had taught the learner that subject and share ways in which we had supported the child and if there was any progress”. The study participants mentioned that the system, where teachers who have taught the same learner come together, has been put in place to address the daily academic challenges they encounter.

Another key aspect highlighted by the study participants was the importance of sharing responsibility with assistant teachers, particularly in the foundation phase, as they

regarded this as a crucial stage for addressing any learning difficulties. According to P4, what seems to be most effective in the foundation phase is, “since we have assistant teachers, we now know that meanwhile I am busy with other learners, the assistant teacher will focus on those learners who have barriers for an extra 5 minutes explaining the work”. Another important aspect as mentioned by P5, is “since we have assistants, I will carry on with other learners, then the assist teacher will work with that group we have identified as struggling for example with reading”. Given the large class sizes in the foundation phase, which range from “40 to 45 learners per class” as shared by study participants who teach in the foundation phase (P4, P5 and P6), it becomes challenging to provide individual attention to those facing barriers to learning. Therefore, in navigating academic challenges, the subject advisor, the local clinic, the teachers who previously taught the learner, and assistant teachers particularly in the foundation phase, all play a crucial role in providing additional support to township teachers who participated in this study with learners who are struggling academically.

Subtheme 3.2: Alternative Measures: Navigating Psychological and Social Challenges

The second subtheme is navigating psychosocial challenges, and these challenges represent a significant struggle for township teachers who participated in this study. Psychosocial challenges reported in this study include peer pressure, child-headed households, neglect, abuse, witnessing parental violence, and anger issues. Township teachers in this study shared that these are among the most difficult issues they face in their classrooms placing emphasis on the need for greater support and collaboration to help these learners overcome these challenges. With that, initiatives that have been utilised as shared by P1 include,

“The social worker from the district, I relate with her on a personal level. I am able to take my phone and ask, in this situation, what do I do. There is another social worker at our main hospital who I can access”.

Another measure that has been utilised as mentioned by P2, is “as subject teachers, we are able to come together and discuss the learners’ situation and how best we can support the learner”. P4 added and said “we referred the child to the local social worker. The mother was asked to bring him after school for sessions”. To address psychosocial challenges faced by learners, the township teachers in this study have opted to utilise the support of the district social worker, subject teachers, and the local social worker, and since their services are free, this alleviates the financial burden on parents, who do not have to worry about paying for these essential services.

Subtheme 3.3: Alternative Measures: Requesting Parental Support

While parental involvement is essential, the township teachers in this study shared that it is not always forthcoming, especially when it comes to parents of learners facing academic challenges. Despite the efforts of study participants in addressing these academic challenges, some parents remain in denial about their child's struggles and fail to take responsibility for addressing the academic difficulties their child faces. Concerning this issue, P3 shared that, “even parents, they have this thing of not wanting to accept that their child is struggling”. P4 went on to say,

“I called the mom in. The mom was in denial. He is the only child at home. The mom said: Hhay ma’am, hhay ma’am, he will be fine. The one who was referred to the social worker for sessions, the mother did not take the child to the social worker”.

On the other hand, P6 shared that, “the biggest problem is that, even when you call the parents in for a meeting to explain what you have discovered, they fail to accept that their child is struggling. It seems like they just don’t understand”. P7 added and said,

“Most of them are in denial. They will tell you that there is nothing wrong with their child, you hate their child. However, there are those who are even willing that their child can be place in a special school”.

Based on what the study participants shared, the issue of parents being in denial appears to be particularly prevalent among those of learners who are struggling academically, and this is compounded by limited support for addressing social issues. However, it is equally evident that local resources, such as the clinic, local social worker, and hospital social worker, play a vital role in supporting township teachers who participated in this study with learners facing barriers to learning.

4.5) Theme 4: Alleviating the Burden: Calling for Onsite Educational Psychologist for SIAS Policy Implementation

Theme 4 primarily emphasises the urgent need for an onsite educational psychologist to address the significant challenges faced by participants in the study. The study participants believe that an onsite educational psychologist at each school will offer invaluable assistance, enabling them to navigate these difficulties with expert guidance. The benefits of having an educational psychologist as mentioned by the township teachers in this study include immediate access to the services of an educational psychologist, facilitation of workshops for teachers (i.e., contribute new knowledge on effective approaches to supporting learners with learning barriers, how to identify learners experiencing such learning barriers, and how to address behavioral challenges in educational contexts), and engage with learners and parents. Each of these benefits will be explored in detail as individual subthemes.

Subtheme 4.1: Immediate Access to Services of an Educational Psychologist

This subtheme emphasises the importance of having unrestricted access to an educational psychologist whenever their expertise is required. Given the diverse and complex nature of the challenges that the study participants come across, they believe that immediate access to a skilled professional, particularly an educational psychologist, will ensure timely intervention and support. With the initial focus being on the management of behavioural challenges, P2 said that,

“I am able to send that one learner who is always involved in fights to the psychologist. I just take the learner out of the class, take the learner to the psychologist’s office, explain the situation, and go back to class. Imagine having to leave 54 learners in class just to attend to learners fighting”.

P7 supports this idea, and this is evident in his statement, where he argues that, “the psychologist should be there daily, so that we can deal with behavioural challenges immediately or any other challenge the learner might be experiencing”.

Moving on to scholastic challenges, the central idea is that the presence of an onsite educational psychologist would greatly simplify the referral process. The study participants deem that instead of the lengthy procedures currently in place, teachers could quickly complete the necessary documentation and have cases promptly assessed by the educational psychologist as this streamlined approach would allow for immediate support, enabling timely interventions for learners in need. In supporting this idea, P5 expressed that,

“People like psychologists are very important. No, it should be made compulsory for each and every school, so that when we have cases to refer, we go to the office and work with this individual. This current system of referral is a problem on its own. Things have gotten to a point where teachers are lacking motivation to refer”.

Adding on this, P2 went on to say, “after a referral, the psychologist will be able to provide strategies to implement in the classroom to accommodate the learner, and how other learners can accommodate that learner as well”. With the SBST being the first point of referral, the study participants stressed that it is important to note that the SBST is composed of teachers, which means they are not always available during school hours to address scholastic challenges that may require immediate attention. P6 mentioned that “when I go and ask for help from a member of the SBST, the teacher is in the classroom, teaching. Remember, as a teacher we have responsibilities. So, if you are there, you are able to step in”.

Given the prevalence of psychosocial challenges within the school environment, as consistently highlighted by the study participants, this is a significant gap where teachers feel they lack the necessary skills to effectively address these issues. P5 shared that,

“These kids need psychologists. They need to attend those sessions, so that they don’t grow up with trauma. Things they see at home! There is rape, sexual whatsoever, they are exposed to those things and domestic abuse. We have disturbed kids in our classrooms. Some of them, they come to school very untidy”.

These challenges are overwhelming as shared by the study participants, and they are in urgent need of support. The underlying idea is that the presence of an onsite educational psychologist will facilitate the provision of essential support, providing specialised guidance, and interventions to empower the study participants in addressing these challenges proficiently.

Subtheme 4.2: Facilitation of Workshops for Teachers

Knowledge is never sufficient for any individual, as new insights continually emerge over time hence, township teachers in this study reported needing an expert who can provide the necessary guidance. The core idea of this subtheme is that the study participants feel the need for an expert who can lead workshops within the school environment. The underlying idea is that workshops for teachers will aim at providing the knowledge the township teachers in this study need to better support learners with barriers to learning as they will cover a variety of essential topics, offering valuable exposure to new knowledge and strategies. Township teachers in this study have identified specific gaps in their knowledge where workshops could be particularly beneficial, helping them overcome the challenges they encounter on a daily basis. P1 said, “if we were to have such a post at our school, the psychologist will be able to guide us through the SIAS process on how to identify learners with barriers to learning”. A workshop in this context would help guide teachers on how to identify learners with barriers to learning. P2 added noting that “the

psychologist will be able to move around the school and upon identifying challenges around the school, a workshop can be held guiding us on how to deal with the identified challenges to make our school a better place”.

The study participants believe that having a professional with the expertise to assess the environment and determine the most effective interventions to address these challenges is crucial. P6 presented another perspective, stating that,

“We need those workshops. Even if I know something, there is always new relevant information about that phenomenon. For example, there might be a child who is behaving in this way, with new research, new strategies can be shared with us teachers through a workshop”.

There is always room for development through the sharing of new, relevant research. The study participants believe that, while traditional methods can be effective, integrating new approaches not only expands the range of strategies available for implementation but also ensures that they are incorporating practices that are aligned with current societal needs and challenges.

Subtheme 4.3: Engage with Learners and Parents

Engaging with learners is a manageable process, but the study participants feel that reaching them on a deeper level requires a specific set of skills. The township teachers in this study find it difficult to connect with both learners and parents, and in this subtheme, the central idea is that an educational psychologist possesses the expertise needed to effectively communicate and make a meaningful impact. Township teachers in this study feel the need for someone who can guide learners through the social phenomena they encounter as they grow and assist parents in understanding how best to support their children as being well-informed on how to navigate these challenges is essential for both teachers and parents to effectively support learners. P1 said, “let’s talk about guidance. Life Orientation is too broad. If we have an onsite psychologist, they will bring expertise. They can dive deeper into

topics that align with identified challenges within the school environment". Furthermore, P2 added and said, "if we have an onsite psychologist, that person will be able to address learners during assembly, addressing challenges which have been identified. This initiative will minimise things such as drugs, pregnancy and whatnot". The issue of drug use emerges as some learners resort to substances to cope with emotional challenges. The presence of a professional, such as an onsite educational psychologist, can help minimise these situations by providing appropriate emotional support and intervention. In the context of teenage pregnancy, educational psychologists play a key role through psychoeducation by facilitating age-appropriate workshops that address critical topics such as decision-making and peer pressure. These interventions equip learners with the knowledge and emotional skills needed to make informed choices, thereby reducing the likelihood of unplanned pregnancies and promoting overall well-being.

When it comes to addressing parents, a common challenge shared by study participants is their denial regarding their child's difficulties. The study participants shared that they often struggle to initiate conversations with parents about their child's struggles due to the fear of denial or resistance hence they believe that an educational psychologist, with their expertise and experience, would be better equipped to navigate such sensitive conversations, hence P3 mentioned that "also, the psychologist will engage with the parent, to say, but this is what the problem is with your child. Let's try to look at other ways to help your child". The township teachers in this study highlighted the importance of having an onsite educational psychologist, as it provides immediate access to psychological support, facilitates workshops for teachers, and fosters engagement with both learners and educators. Furthermore, an educational psychologist's support will ease the workload of teachers and the SBST, making the effective implementation of the SIAS policy more achievable.

4.6) Summary of the Chapter

The need for an onsite educational psychologist at township schools to support the implementation of the SIAS policy is clearly outlined by the study participants. As expressed by township teachers in this study, there are numerous challenges at the school level, and the lack of support from the FSDBST exacerbates the difficulties faced by the township teachers who participated in this study in ensuring that no learner is left behind, which is the core goal of the SIAS policy. These challenges, ranging from academic to psychosocial issues, highlight the necessity of having a knowledgeable professional to provide guidance within the school environment. The discussion on the benefits of having an onsite psychologist clearly illustrates the positive impact such a role would have on the school and the ease with which the SIAS policy could be implemented.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1) Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 5 focuses on analysing, contextualising, and discussing the findings presented in Chapter 4. This discussion chapter is structured according to the theoretical framework used to ground the study, namely Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory, and also integrates reference to literature presented in Chapters 1 and 2 where relevant. Overall, the chapter builds on the findings chapter by situating the perceptions and experiences of township teachers who participated in this study within the chosen theoretical framework, drawing on existing literature, and enhancing the understanding of the support required from educational psychologists to assist these teachers in implementing the SIAS policy effectively. In terms of the structuring of the chapter according to the theoretical framework, the findings will be discussed in relation to the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem, and proximal processes, drawing connections to how each system influences the experiences and outcomes of the individuals involved.

5.2) Microsystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the microsystem as the immediate environment surrounding an individual, which includes the people and resources directly available to them, such as family, neighbours, and colleagues. In this study, the core individual in the system represents township teachers from under-resourced schools in the Fezile Dabi district within the Free State province. The microsystem pertains to the people and services these teachers can easily access in their immediate environment while implementing the SIAS policy. Moreover, Becker and Todd (2018) highlight that although the individual is at the center of the microsystem, "there are no individual problems, as each family member's decisions impact the others" (p. 1125). This highlights how the people and services within the microsystem influence how the core individual perceives and addresses their challenges. It underscores the importance of viewing the microsystem not only as a source of support (or frustration) for the core individual, but also as a factor that shapes their experiences.

As presented in **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**, the immediate services reportedly accessible to the township teachers who participated in this study address particular identified challenges. For academic challenges commonly encountered in the classroom (e.g., comprehension difficulties, sentence construction, word pronunciation, and reading skills) as outlined in ***Subtheme 3.1: Alternative Measures: Navigating Academic Challenges***, the services the teachers reported being able to immediately access include those provided by subject teachers and assistant teachers. These reported academic challenges appear to be common in other educational settings, as were reported in Nomsa's (2020) study, which focused on inclusive education in schools within the Mamaila circuit. Another set of challenges the study participants reported encountering are psychosocial challenges, which include learners being abused at home and exposure to parental violence. Artz et al. (2014) highlight the impact of psychosocial challenges on children and youth, noting that they have long-term effects, including “physical health outcomes, mental health challenges, and behavioral problems” (p. 493) and indicate that if these issues are not addressed in a timely manner, they are likely to impact the child's academic performance. For these psychosocial challenges, the services of subject teachers and the local social worker were reported to be accessible to address the psychosocial issues that the study participants may have identified in the classroom.

For both academic and psychosocial challenges identified by the study participants, it is crucial for parents to be involved not only as legal guardians but also in a collaborative role. As Hornby and Blackwell (2018) assert, the parent-teacher accessibility is vital for the academic success and psychosocial adjustment of the supported learner. Therefore, parents are an integral part of this system, as they are the primary source of support for their children, and they need to collaborate with teachers to help address the identified challenges. The SBST serves as the initial point of contact for implementing the SIAS policy when teachers encounter academic or psychosocial challenges with their learners. This aligns with their role as outlined in the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014), therefore, the SBST is a

key part of the immediate services available to the study participants, offering support whenever any of the aforementioned challenges arise in their classrooms.

The township teachers who participated in this study indicated that the immediate services available to them include subject teachers, assistant teachers, local social workers, parents, and SBST. These services are apparently readily accessible to support the teachers in the implementation of the SIAS policy. It is important to note that all the immediate services identified by the participants address the shortcomings of the FSDBST, as discussed in **4.3) Theme 2: Free State DBST (FSDBST) inefficiencies obstruct the implementation of the SIAS policy**, in the implementation of the SIAS policy. The study participants highlighted several shortcomings of the FSDBST, including the mismanagement of referral documents, delays or lack of responses to referrals, a shortage of educational psychologists, and inadequate resources within the FSDBST. These challenges have necessitated seeking external services as alternative means of support for implementing the SIAS policy.

5.3) Mesosystem

The mesosystem refers to the interactions between various people or services within the microsystem, all of which relate to the core individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It must be noted that the mesosystem and the microsystem are interrelated and difficult to discuss in isolation. In this study, the mesosystem encompasses the interactions among the individuals and services within the microsystem available to the study participants for supporting the implementation of the SIAS policy. Xia et al. (2020) describe these interactions among the individuals and services within the microsystem as the relationships among the services within the microsystem. Although the interactions between the services and people within the microsystem were not directly explored in the interviews with participants, and thus do not explicitly appear as part of the findings in **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**, there are notable probable interactions between the core individual (i.e., the township teachers who participated in this study), and the people and services within the microsystem. This section

focuses on exploring these interactions between the teachers who participated in this study and services within the microsystem into greater length, focusing on how these interactions are enabled.

In implementing the SIAS policy to address academic challenges, township teachers who participated in this study often recommended the local clinic to parents as a resource for addressing health issues that might hinder the learner from reaching their full potential in the classroom. Local clinics are public entities that provide free services to ensure all South African's right to access healthcare services, as stated in the South African Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996) and highlighted in a contextual example in the work of Crush and Tawodzera (2014) in which they emphasise that this right is not reserved solely for South African citizens but extends to everyone within the country's borders, including foreign migrants. Importantly, the recommendation to utilise a local clinic reflects the socioeconomic status of the population served by the study participants. The interaction between the services and people within the microsystem is evident in the collaboration between parents and the local clinic, facilitated by the teachers' recommendations. The practicality of this interaction is illustrated in the story shared by P4 in **Subtheme 3.1: Alternative Measures: Navigating Academic Challenges** where P4 described a learner experiencing vision problems and the guardian was referred to the local clinic for assistance. This shifted the interaction from the teacher and guardian to the guardian and the local clinic, illustrating the shifting nature of relationships among services and people within the microsystem (Xia et al.,2020). Building on the theme of addressing academic challenges, another form of support emerges through the reported interactions between the township teachers who participated in this study and their colleagues who previously taught the learner the subject in which the learner is struggling with. As presented in **Subtheme 3.1: Alternative Measures: Navigating Academic Challenges**, the idea is that the teachers who had previously taught the learner collaborate with the current teacher to share interventions that had been previously implemented to assist the learner. This reflects the

collaboration among colleagues, united in their efforts to support the learner's academic success, exemplifying the implementation of the SIAS policy. While one might associate this element of support with the “support” component outlined in the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014), which involves the support required from the teacher after the process of screening, identifying, and assessing, it takes on a different dimension in this context. Here, it underscores the need to repeatedly engage in this process of support with the help of colleagues, driven by the shortcomings of the FSDBST. This interaction, emphasised within the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), is clearly evident in the collaboration among teachers who work together to discuss and share potential interventions to address the identified academic challenges.

The final interaction mentioned by study participants regarding addressing academic challenges involves the support of assistant teachers, particularly in the foundation phase. As noted by foundation phase teachers who participated in this study, in **Subtheme 3.1: Alternative Measures: Navigating Academic Challenges**, the large class sizes present a challenge in reaching all learners facing academic difficulties. Large class sizes affecting the implementation of the SIAS policy appear to be a common challenge, particularly in public schools, as highlighted in Engelbrecht et al. (2015) and Mfuthwana and Dreyer's (2018) studies. However, with the presence of assistant teachers, the foundation phase teachers who participated in this study shared that while they focus on other learners, the assistant teachers are able to provide support to those who are struggling. The interaction here is evident in the collaboration between foundation phase teachers who participated in this study and assistant teachers, working together to alleviate the academic challenges faced by learners.

Shifting to psychosocial challenges, the first interaction is observed between the township teachers who participated in this study and subject teachers, who are their fellow colleagues. The central idea is that subject teachers, in collaboration with the study participants, work together to find ways to support the learner facing the identified

psychosocial challenges. Artz et al. (2014) discusses the long-term effects of psychosocial challenges, underscoring the critical need for immediate attention, which is why teachers work together to provide the necessary support. There seems to be a strong collaborative support among the teachers at the two schools involved in this study, as they rely on one another to address both the scholastic and psychosocial challenges encountered in the classroom. Collaboration stands out as the key element for the effective implementation of the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014). In addressing psychosocial challenges, the local social worker is also involved, with the participation of the parent or guardian, the child is referred to the social worker for further support. This is practically demonstrated in a scenario shared by P4 in ***Subtheme 3.2: Alternative Measures: Navigating Psychological and Social Challenges***, where the learner is referred to the local social worker, with the mother required to bring the learner for sessions. The interaction between the services and the people within the microsystem is evident through this referral, as it initiates a connection between the social worker and the parent. The services of the local clinic and social worker demonstrate the element of community collaboration, aligning with Jason et al.'s (2015) concept of a sense of community, particularly the aspect of interpersonal support.

Throughout this section discussing the mesosystem, parents are consistently referenced, highlighting their crucial role in supporting any challenges the teacher may identify in the classroom regarding their child. In ***Subtheme 3.3: Alternative Measures: Requesting Parental Support***, a clear picture emerges of how parents reportedly interact with the township teachers who participated in this study, particularly in understanding and addressing their child's academic and psychosocial challenges. The participants highlighted that it is common for parents to be in denial about their child's difficulties, however, sometimes parents acknowledge their child's situation and provide the necessary support. The inconsistencies in parental support demonstrate that parental involvement in the implementation of the SIAS policy is not always there. This inconsistency in parental support is reinforced by Rottaro's (2022) study which reported limited support from parents in

collaborating with teachers to support their child. Still focusing on support, the SBST is another component that plays a significant role in the microsystem, interacting with the study participants in supporting them in the implementing the SIAS policy. However, study participants reported that the interaction between teachers and the SBST is not always smooth. For example, P6 in ***Subtheme 4.1: Immediate Access to Services of an Educational Psychologist*** mentioned that “when I go and ask for help from a member of the SBST, the teacher is in the classroom, teaching. Remember, as a teacher we have responsibilities. So, if you are there, you are able to step in”. The issue of limited access to the SBST arises because the SBST is composed of teachers who are not always available when a crisis occurs, due to their other teaching responsibilities. There seems to be a discrepancy between the teaching responsibilities and the duties assigned to the SBST, as outlined in the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014). This makes the practicality of receiving immediate support from the SBST almost impossible when needed. Various interactions are evident, particularly between the core individual (i.e., the township teachers who participated in this study), and the services and people within the microsystem. The services and people within the microsystem in which the study participants interact with or have a relationship with include foundation phase assistant teachers, parents (despite their inconsistent involvement), SBST, local clinic, local social worker, and other teachers or colleagues within the school environment. Moreover, further interaction between the services and people within the microsystem appears to occur between the parents and the local clinic, as well as between parents and the local social workers, facilitated through the referrals made by the study participants.

5.4) Exosystem

The exosystem is conceptualised by Bronfenbrenner (1986) as resources situated outside the developing individual. This system plays a critical role, as the psychological functioning of the core individual “is affected not only by what happens in the environments in which they spend their time but also by what occurs in other settings” they are indirectly

connect to (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 723). In this study, the township teachers who participated in this study are identified as the core individual (i.e., the developing person), while the FSDBST is considered a setting that does not directly involve the core individual, however, events within the FSDBST impact the core individual. Xia et al. (2020) simplify the definition of the exosystem by stating that “it consists of a context in which the developing individuals of interest are not situated, but in which those who interact with them are” (p. 8).

In exploring the exosystem, reference is made to **4.3) Theme 2: Free State DBST**

(FSDBST) inefficiencies obstruct the implementation of the SIAS policy, which explores the inefficiencies of the FSDBST that hinder the effective implementation of the SIAS policy.

The challenges highlighted by the township teachers in this study illustrate how the FSDBST, as a setting that does not directly involve them, affects the implementation of the SIAS policy in their schools. The first challenge identified was the mismanagement of referral documents. As discussed in ***Subtheme 2.1: Mismanagement of Referral Documentation***, the challenge is that while referrals are made, there are instances where the FSDBST loses the referral documents, requiring the referral process to be repeated. The study participants perceive the process of repeating the referral process as daunting due to the lengthy paperwork involved, including the completion of the SNA. This daunting referral process is clearly explained in the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014), which includes the completion of the learner profile, SNA 1, SNA 2, Individual Support Plan (ISP), Form DBE 120, and copies of the learner's work. The second challenge identified pertains to the delayed response to referrals submitted to the FSDBST. Referrals are made based on the severity of the case presented, indicating an immediate need for support from the FSDBST. Delays or a lack of response to referrals contribute to the widely discussed issue of insufficient support from the DBST in the implementation of inclusive education (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Hess, 2020; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). As outlined in ***Subtheme 2.2: Delayed or Lack of Response to Referrals***, the study participants express concern over the lack of responses to referred cases, and in some instances, there is no response at all. This necessitates the referral to be made again, reverting to the need to repeat the daunting referral process. In understanding

this daunting process, Matolo and Rambuda's (2022) explores aspects of the referral process, referencing how teachers conduct assessments by focusing "on the screening process, not only on the barriers within learners but also on their environment" (p.13), and emphasising the need to "provide all learners with opportunities to show what they know or do not know and what they can do or not do" (p. 14), before offering support.

Another challenge shared by the study participants is the shortage of educational psychologists within the FSDBST (i.e., a setting within the exosystem). As outlined in ***Subtheme 2.3: Shortage of Educational Psychologists***, when referrals are made, the typical response from the FSDBST is that there is only one educational psychologist in the district. As a result, another member of the FSDBST, such as a social worker or learning facilitator, is sent to assist the school. However, as shared by the study participants, the individual often lacks the necessary skills to effectively address the case at hand. The challenge of the shortage of educational psychologists within the DBST appears to have persisted over the years, as evidenced by Farrell et al. (2005) and Jimerson et al. (2009) where study participants in their studies similarly reported the issue of a high number of learners requiring attention, yet the low number of educational psychologists at the district level limits the capacity to address these learners' needs. Years later, the same issue persisted, as highlighted by participants in Moolla and Lazarus' (2014) study in the Western Cape, where only six educational psychologists were assigned to individual circuits that encompasses 40 schools per circuit. As of 2024, this issue continues to remain unresolved by the DBST. When an educational psychologist is available, the study participants reported that the results presented after assessing the learner often contradict the challenges initially identified by the teacher.

The last challenge is the insufficient resources within the FSDBST. The implementation of the SIAS policy requires support from the FSDBST, but the lack of resources, such as the absence of formal relationships with health facilities and insufficient alternative school placements for learners in need, create significant challenges. The

challenges related to the lack of resources appear to be common, as similar findings were reported in the writings of Engelbrecht et al. (2015), Nomsa (2020), and Ntseto et al. (2021). These inadequacies hinder the effective implementation of the SIAS policy, as the schools primarily serve learners who lack the financial means to access private healthcare or afford assessments by private educational psychologists, services that are critical to the support process.

Given the challenges posed by the FSDBST, teachers have turned to seeking external assistance, not only from their immediate environment as discussed in section **5.2) Microsystem**, but also from external settings. Building good relationships with professionals from other specialties appears to provide an advantage. As mentioned by P1 in **Subtheme 3.1: Alternative Measures: Navigating Academic Challenges** and **Subtheme 3.2: Alternative Measures: Navigating Psychological and Social Challenges**, there is that flexibility to consult the FSDBST subject advisor for academic concerns, while psychosocial challenges can be addressed by reaching out to the district social worker. This is primarily based on a personal relationship that P1 has with these professionals. The subject advisor and the social worker are part of the FSDBST, as the DBST is composed of various professionals who play crucial roles in the implementation of the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014).

5.5) Macrosystem

The macrosystem examines “patterns of ideology and organisation of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 8). In this study, attention is given to the SIAS policy as a framework (ideology) shaping the experiences of the township teachers who participated in this study. Study participants perceived the SIAS policy in two contrasting ways: as a great policy and as one that is challenging to implement. On a positive note, as highlighted in **Subtheme 1.1: Positive Perceptions: “It is a great policy”**, the study participants regard the SIAS policy as a valuable tool that provides guidance for implementing inclusivity in the classroom. In light of the socioeconomic challenges faced by learners, as discussed in **Subtheme 2.4:**

Insufficient Resources within the FSDBST, the SIAS policy is viewed as ensuring that learners receive necessary support regardless of their financial ability to access it. This also supports the status of the schools, as they range between quintile 1 and 3, indicating they are schools entirely reliant on departmental support, catering to learners who cannot afford to pay school fees (Maistry & Africa, 2020; NDoBE, 2023). There appears to be a generally positive perception of the SIAS policy, as teachers in Hess (2020) and Melane's (2022) studies also expressed this optimism toward the policy in hopes of achieving inclusive education. Teachers prioritise the well-being of learners, viewing the policy as "good for the child" (Hess, 2020, p. 55), since its ultimate purpose is to benefit the learners.

Alongside the positive perceptions of the SIAS policy, there arises the notion that it is viewed as overly demanding, as discussed in **Subtheme 1.2: Negative Experiences: A difficult policy to implement**. Given the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the implementation of the SIAS policy, the current focus will center on the SBST. According to the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014), the SBST is tasked with addressing teachers' requests for assistance and creating support plans for learners facing learning barriers. This process is initiated when teachers seek further support after initial interventions prove inadequate (DoBE, 2014). Additionally, the SBST is responsible for referring cases to the DBST when interventions remain insufficient despite the SBST's support (DoBE, 2014). Study participants who are also SBST members emphasised that this responsibility is overwhelming, especially as they must also fulfill their teaching duties. They expressed difficulty in balancing the dual roles of being a teacher and serving as part of the SBST. This sentiment is echoed by other study participants who are solely teachers, highlighting the challenge of implementing the policy in classrooms with large class sizes. The issue of large class sizes highlights teachers' struggles to identify and implement interventions for learners with academic barriers in overcrowded classrooms as no fee schools (e.g., quintile 1 to 3 schools) cannot afford additional staff members, except when the DoBE allocates a budget to accommodate new staff (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). The issue

of overcrowded classrooms aligns with the perspectives of teachers in other studies, who described the SIAS policy as adding to the challenges of teaching, reporting difficulties in assessing learners with barriers to learning and in creating effective interventions to support them (Hess, 2020). With all that, addressing psychosocial challenges resulted in the greatest level of distress for the study participants, leading them to express the need for a qualified professional (an educational psychologist) within the school to manage these issues. While the SIAS policy is regarded as an effective policy, significant challenges in its implementation remain.

5.6) Chronosystem

The chronosystem highlights the significance of historical events, including stability and change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Change over time can be observed in the development of the SIAS policy, which is detailed step by step in **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK** covering its historical context and the stakeholders involved in its implementation. To provide an overview of this shift in the education system, the development of the SIAS policy began with the appointment of the NCSNET and NCESS in 1997, following the end of the apartheid era, to address the shortcomings of the apartheid education system (DoE, 1997). Various stakeholders involved in these two committees reached a consensus and developed the White Paper 6, which advocated for community collaboration, the inclusion of children with learning and developmental challenges into mainstream schools, inclusive education and training, supportive approaches, funding strategies, high-quality education for all, and the promotion of rights and responsibilities for everyone within the education system (Daniels, 2010; DoE, 2001; Engelbrecht, 2004). The focus on inclusive education and training further contributed to the development of the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014). However, no other changes over time were explored among the study participants. A connection that can be made in relation to the study participants is that, although changes in the education system are evident through key developments such as the introduction of White Paper 6 and the presence of the SIAS

policy within school environments, there remains a significant gap in effective implementation, highlighting how the efforts of the stakeholders who developed the SIAS policy are unnoticed.

5.7) Proximal processes

Bronfenbrenner and Morris introduced the concepts of proximal processes and resource characteristics in 1998. Proximal processes “are considered the main force promoting development” through different interactions the core individual has with all other systems with regular interaction promoting healthy development (Merçon-Vargas et al., 2020, p. 322). In the implementation of the SIAS policy, the teachers who participated in this study, as core individuals, require constant interaction with the educational psychologist. Therefore in **4.5) Theme 4: Alleviating the Burden: Calling for Onsite Educational Psychologist for SIAS Policy Implementation**, it is suggested that through the placement of an onsite educational psychologist, development will occur, and the SIAS policy will be effectively implemented. Constant interaction with all other parties within the various systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) will enable the functional implementation of the SIAS policy. However, the irregular interaction with the FSDBST, which falls within the exosystem, is hindering the implementation of the SIAS policy and impacting the development of the core individual. An individual enters a space with certain characteristics, and proximal processes explore how these characteristics influence their interaction with the previously discussed systems (Xia et al., 2020). The township teachers who participated in this study bring specific characteristics in the implementation of the SIAS policy. The particular characteristics of focus will be person characteristics, which Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) describe as innate capabilities, mental functioning, and experience. As shared in Table 3.1 in Subsection **3.3) Sample and Sampling**, the study participants bring experience in the implementation of the SIAS policy. Additionally, they possess an understanding of the SIAS policy, which plays a crucial role in its implementation. This means they have the experience and expertise to implement

inclusive education in their classrooms. Their experience fosters easier interaction with the previously discussed systems, as they bring person characteristics that are vital for the successful implementation of the SIAS policy. Furthermore, the study participants demonstrate emotional commitment and passion for their work by actively seeking solutions to the problems their learners face, despite environmental constraints and systemic challenges. To summarise, proximal processes differ from the interactions within the mesosystem, which focuses on the interaction between teachers and their immediate environment. In contrast, proximal processes take a holistic approach, considering the interactions of all the systems alongside what teachers bring to the environment, such as their person characteristics.

5.8) Onsite Educational Psychologist: Moving from the Exosystem to the Microsystem

Currently, educational psychologists operate within the FSDBST at the exosystem level, but participants are calling for an onsite presence, representing a transition to the microsystem. This shift entails moving from an external setting that indirectly influences core individuals to their immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007), enabling better implementation of the SIAS policy.

The study participants expressed the need for an onsite educational psychologist, driven by the desire for immediate and consistent access to psychological support services. Given the diverse challenges encountered within the school environment, participants, as highlighted in ***Subtheme 4.1: Immediate Access to Services of an Educational Psychologist***, argue for the presence of a professional equipped with the skills to address these challenges. For instance, managing behavioural challenges would become more efficient with such support readily available. One of the key skills of an educational psychologist, as noted by Thielking and Jimerson (2006), is the implementation of classroom behaviour interventions. The central idea is that while the teacher continues working with the rest of the class, the specialist can address the behavioural issues with the specific learners involved and also equip the teacher with strategies to manage such behaviors effectively in

the classroom. Additionally, study participants emphasised the benefit of simplifying the referral process, which would further enhance support efficiency. Instead of going through the lengthy process of sending referral documents and waiting for feedback, in case of an emergency, teachers would know that the relevant person to approach is just a few doors away. This is particularly valuable given that educational psychologists are conceptualised as specialists who can assess, diagnose, and provide recommendations within the child's context (Melane, 2022). Being onsite would allow for immediate attention to cases and the provision of timely intervention suggestions. One of the diverse challenges mentioned was the wide range of psychosocial issues present at the schools where the study participants work. As noted by Hess (2020) and Melane (2022) outline, one of the roles of educational psychologists is offering counseling to learners. Given the traumas that participants report learners experiencing, such a professional would be able to guide how each learner, based on their specific case, can effectively cope with and address their trauma.

As scholarly research continues to generate new knowledge, study participants expressed the need for an onsite educational psychologist to facilitate workshops, as shared in **Subtheme 4.2: Facilitation of Workshops for Teachers**. These workshops would not only provide guidance on relevant literature for supporting learners but also offer training on how to Screen, Identify, Assess, and Support a child with learning barriers, as well as strategies to improve the learning environment. Research by Farrell et al. (2005), Reinke et al. (2011), and Thielking and Jimerson (2006) affirms that such skills are within the professional scope of educational psychologists, highlighting that staying up to date with current research on relevant issues and organising workshops for teachers to provide information about learners' welfare are all integral aspects of their scope of practice. One final reason shared by the study participants is the importance of engaging with learners and parents. As presented in **Subtheme 4.3: Engage with Learners and Parents**, the challenge lies in teachers' difficulty in having conversations with parents about the academic challenges their child is facing. In many cases, parents tend to be in denial, as discussed in

Subtheme 3.3: Alternative Measures: Requesting Parental Support, which complicates these discussions. With the current arrangement where the educational psychologist is positioned at the exosystem level, at the district level, as part of the FSDBST (DoBE, 2014), the limited access to these services creates a challenge in reaching parents and getting them on board with addressing their child's challenges. In terms of providing guidance to learners, the argument by one of the study participants (P1) is that Life Orientation is seen as too academic and unable to deeply explore the topics that require more engagement. An educational psychologist will be able to connect with learners on a deeper level and address social issues during assembly. This can be related to the definition of the role of an educational psychologist in the SIAS policy, which involves "decision-making around any form of support-provisioning to learners, schools, and teachers" (DoBE, 2014, p. 35). The need for an onsite educational psychologist arises from the necessity of having a professional with their expertise present in the implementation of the SIAS policy.

The discussion chapter answered the research question, "What are township teachers' perceptions about the support they need from educational psychologists in supporting them to implement the SIAS policy?" Due to the inaccessibility of educational psychologists at the district level and the varying challenges teachers face with the FSDBST in implementing the SIAS policy, township teachers believe the best solution is for each school to have an onsite educational psychologist for obvious reasons that have been stated in **4.3) Theme 2: Free State DBST (FSDBST) inefficiencies obstruct the implementation of the SIAS policy**. Although the study participants shared their perspectives on potential solutions to the challenges presented, McLaren (2017) highlights the issue of budgetary constraints within the DoBE, which should be taken into account when such recommendations are made. Moreover, the DoBE's (2014) initiative to appoint district-based educational psychologists should not be overlooked, as it constitutes a significant step toward addressing these challenges. The study's objective was achieved, as the research question was effectively answered.

5.9) Summary of the Chapter

Findings were integrated with relevant literature, based on Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory. The microsystem examined the immediate accessibility to services by the study participants, while the mesosystem emphasised the interactions between participants and immediate services that provide direct assistance in implementing the SIAS policy. The exosystem highlighted the FSDBST as an external factor that indirectly impacts the core individual (the study participants) in the SIAS policy implementation. The macrosystem explored the SIAS policy and how it is understood by the study participants. As the study did not explore change over time, the discussion of the chronosystem concentrated on the development of the SIAS policy over a timeline. Proximal processes were explored in relation to traits and contextual factors that the study participants bring to the implementation of the SIAS policy and how these traits influence their interactions with all other systems. The study participants ultimately advocated for an onsite educational psychologist, recognising the need for such expertise in the schools where they work. This underscores the importance of moving the services of an educational psychologist from the exosystem to the microsystem.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1) Overview of the Chapter

This final chapter of the research report provides an overview of the study, discusses the implications of the study, addresses its limitations, and offers recommendations for future research.

6.2) Overview of the Study

The study aimed to explore township teachers' perceptions regarding the type of support they require from educational psychologists for the effective implementation of the SIAS policy. The participants were teachers from schools in the Fezile Dabi District of the Free State Province, categorised within the first three quintiles (NDoBE, 2023) and described as being fully reliant on the Free State Department of Education for resources and support (Maistry & Africa, 2020). These teachers were considered well-positioned to offer insights into whether they receive adequate support from the FSDBST in implementing the SIAS policy. This study is significant as it provides valuable information on the specific support needed from the FSDBST to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education in township schools that rely entirely on government resources and assistance.

To explore township teachers' perceptions regarding the support they require from educational psychologists in implementing the SIAS policy, interviews were conducted with seven township teachers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three teachers from a high school and four teachers from a primary school in the Fezile Dabi District of the Free State Province. The interviews were transcribed, and reflective thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data.

As presented in **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**, four main themes were generated in understanding township teachers' perceptions regarding the support they need from educational psychologists for the implementation of the SIAS policy. While the participating teachers viewed the SIAS policy as a valuable initiative, they found its implementation

challenging, primarily because it adds to their already heavy workload. Teachers who were part of the SBST expressed that the responsibilities assigned to them, as outlined in the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014), were overwhelming. Furthermore, participants highlighted difficulties in adequately supporting learners with barriers to learning, citing insufficient support from the FSDBST as a key challenge. The challenges encountered by study participants with the FSDBST included the mismanagement of referral documents, delayed or absent responses to referrals, a shortage of educational psychologists, and insufficient resources within the FSDBST. These issues further hinder the effective implementation of the SIAS policy in the school environments where the participants work. Faced with the need to continue supporting learners with barriers to learning in the hopes of implementing the SIAS policy, participants opted to seek external support. This support addresses both academic and psychosocial challenges encountered in their classrooms. The sources of support include fellow colleagues, assistant teachers, local clinics, local social workers, parents (though inconsistently), district social workers, district subject advisors, and the SBST.

In conclusion, the study participants believe that to effectively implement the SIAS policy, having an onsite educational psychologist is essential. This would allow for immediate access to their services, including streamlining the referral process, facilitating workshops for teachers, engaging directly with learners addressing psychosocial challenges, and working with parents to address their children's difficulties while providing the necessary support.

6.3) Implications of the Study

Inclusive education was introduced in South Africa to ensure that no learner is left behind, particularly those from previously excluded populations such as African, Coloured, and Indian communities during the apartheid era (Engelbrecht, 2020). The implementation of the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) led to the development of the SIAS policy (DoBE, 2014), which advocates for the inclusion and accommodation of all learners, regardless of the barriers to learning they may face. Township schools, like those where the study

participants are employed, are intended to benefit from the SIAS policy through the support of the FSDBST. However, this support appears to be insufficient or lacking in practice.

The findings of this study reveal a persistent gap in the implementation of inclusive education in schools serving populations that were central to the initial need for the development of the SIAS policy. This gap is evident in the continued exclusion of learners, who are still being left behind due to the insufficient support provided by the Department of Education, as observed with the FSDBST. The findings highlight a crucial point of awareness for the FSDBST regarding the reasons behind the lack of SIAS policy implementation in public schools in the Fezile Dabi district. Additionally, they offer valuable insight into how the implementation of the SIAS policy could be made more effective, specifically through the assignment of an educational psychologist to each school. The findings further highlight the vital role played by local resources, such as the local social worker and local clinic, in collaborating with the township teachers who participated in this study, as well as with the parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning. This collaborative effort demonstrates an important element of support for the SIAS policy, showing how community-based resources contribute to its implementation and effectiveness.

6.4) Limitations of the study

The study was conducted with seven participants from two schools, which means that its findings are limited to the experiences of the study participants and cannot be generalised to the broader population of the Fezile Dabi District. However, the goal of the study was not to generalise but rather to generate insight in relation to township teachers' perceptions regarding the support they need from educational psychologists in implementing the SIAS policy. The sample size is acknowledged as a limitation, as it restricts the broader applicability of the findings. In the interpretation of the findings, the teachers' years of experience were not critically considered in the interpretation of the findings, as this aspect was not explored during the interviews. This serves as a limitation, as the discussion of their teaching experience could have offered additional insights

The study successfully achieved its objective of exploring township teachers' perceptions on the support they need from educational psychologists in implementing the SIAS policy. This was achieved through the development of new insights, with findings providing valuable perspectives on improving the policy's implementation, particularly through the assignment of an onsite educational psychologist to each school. While the study objective was achieved, another limitation of the study was the researcher's failure to explore the history of inclusive education within the respective schools where the study participants work. Gaining insight into the state of support that was offered to learners before the implementation of the SIAS policy could have offered a more all-inclusive understanding of what existed previously, what worked, and how it compares to the current implementation of the SIAS policy. By focusing primarily on the current state of inclusive education, the study was limited in its exploration of the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), which considers change over time.

The researcher's overfamiliarity with the study participants could have influenced the way information was shared during the interviews. While semi-structured interviews offer flexibility for participants to expand on their responses, the element of overfamiliarity with the researcher could have impacted the dynamics of the interview, potentially affecting the depth of the information shared. This could have introduced bias or influenced the nature of the responses provided by the participants.

6.5) Recommendations for Future Research

There has been limited research on the implementation of the SIAS policy in township schools, which highlights a critical area for future research. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the support needed by township teachers in implementing the SIAS policy, focus groups could be utilised. Nyumba et al. (2018) define focus groups as "a technique where a researcher assembles a group of individuals to discuss a specific topic, aiming to draw from the complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of the participants through a moderated interaction" (p. 21). Focus groups offer the advantage

of shared meaning and a wider range of perspectives by involving more study participants. Alternatively, the same data collection method used in this study, namely, one-on-one interviews may be used in future research, but with a larger sample size. Another recommendation is to involve a researcher who is unfamiliar with the study participants. This approach can help reduce bias and minimise the influence on data collection processes. Lastly, further research could focus on understanding inclusive education as a continuum in township schools. Such research would help uncover how support has been provided to learners with barriers to learning over time.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule



Interview schedule

I began the interview with a brief introduction of myself, the background of the research study and that it is for the purpose of a Master's Degree in Educational Psychology.

Just to reiterate the ethical principles of this study, I went through the participant information sheet, explained and emphasised concepts such as anonymity, confidentiality, permission to withdraw/not answer questions that participants may not feel comfortable with, and that there were no risks/benefits associated with participating in this study.

Participants were then asked to sign the consent form to indicate their consent to participate, as well as to be audio-recorded.

Finally, participants were provided with the platform to ask any related questions before the interview process began.

Guideline Questions for Interview:

How long have you been teaching?

How many children, on average, are in your classroom?

What are the most prominent difficulties that the children in your classroom present with?

Can you please share a case of a learner and an intervention you designed and implemented to assist that learner with the difficulties they presented with?

What are your thoughts on the SIAS-policy and specifically the responsibilities it assigns to teachers?

What role can Educational Psychologists play in supporting teachers to meet the requirements of the SIAS-policy?

What challenges do you come across in the design and development of interventions which are aimed at addressing learners' learning barriers?

How equipped do you feel in managing these?

What or who has supported you in supporting children who experience barriers?

What happens in a case where an intervention proves not to be effective? (Share an experience if there is any).

With all that you have said, do you think there is a need for an Educational Psychologist in supporting teachers to fulfil their responsibilities as assigned in the SIAS- policy? Please support your answer.

Appendix B: Free State Department of Education Information Sheet



14 June 2023

For Attention: Free State Department of Education

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo and I am currently enrolled as a masters student in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree, I am required to conduct research.

I have decided to conduct my research study within the broad area of Inclusive Education; with the title of my research study being **Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions.**

With your permission, I would like to invite teachers from Mafube District to partake in my study, which will explore township teachers' perceptions of the support required from Educational Psychologists in under-resourced South African schools in assisting teachers to meet the requirements set out in the SIAS-policy.

Participation in this study would require approximately 2 to 3 members of each selected school to participate in individual interviews. Each of these interviews will be approximately 60 minutes in length. More specifically, conducted with teachers who had gone through the process of assessing and developing an intervention for a learner who was identified as experiencing some learning barrier/s. All interviews will be audio recorded with the permission of the teachers.

Interviews will be conducted at a time and place that are convenient for the individual participants and will not disrupt daily school activities. Participation in this study is voluntary and participants will have the right to withdraw at any time. Participants also have a right not to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with. There are no potential risks or benefits associated with participating in this study. However, should participants feel distressed after the interview as they become more cognisant of the difficulties they encounter in accommodating different children in a classroom, the details of free counselling services will be provided.

Anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed in face-to-face interviews; however, both anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed in writing up the findings and publishing these. In this regard, participants' names will be changed, and pseudonyms will be adopted in the write up of the results. These pseudonyms will in no manner be traced back to the participants' identities, including the direct quotes that will be used in the publication of the findings. Each school will also remain anonymous in the publication of the findings.

The transcribed interviews will be anonymous and will only be seen by me and my research supervisor and will be kept on a password protected computer; as will the actual interviews. In this manner unauthorised access of the raw data and the transcriptions will be prevented. Once the study is completed, the collected data will be kept for future research to be used as secondary data with the permission of the participants.

Results will be reported in the form of a research report and may be published in peer-reviewed journals or presented at conferences. Please note that this research report will be placed online in WiredSpace - the University of the Witwatersrand Online Research repository where it can be accessed by registered WITS students. On request, a summary of the results can be emailed to school principal/s 6 months after having conducted the interviews. Prior to data collection, participants will be required to sign the participant consent form.

A summary of the results will be submitted to your Department upon approval of the research report.

I look forward to your response.

Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo
 Researcher and M.Ed. Student
 064 679 5773
2623430@students.wits.ac.za

 Vorster

Ms. Adri Vorster
 Research Supervisor
 011 717 4554
adri.vorster@wits.ac.za

Appendix C: Research Application Form

(ANNEXURE: A)

Enquiries: MZ Thango & KK Motshumi

Ref: Research Application Form

Email:

MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za

K.Motshumi@fseducation.gov.za



education

Department of
Education
FREE STATE PROVINCE

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE FSDOE:

1. Collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
2. A bound and soft copy of the dissertation/thesis MUST be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein and a soft copy can be emailed to the above-mentioned email addresses.
3. On completion of research, the researcher will be expected to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the department, at a date, time and venue decided upon by the department.
4. The Ethics document attached to the research application form (Annexure: B) must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in the department.
5. Costs relating to all the conditions above are the responsibility of the researcher.
6. Researchers should not conduct research during the fourth term of the year (October to December).
7. Researchers who are educators and are presently teaching, are not allowed to conduct research at schools where they teach, unless the research assistant is appointed to administer the data collection processes. The details of the appointed research assistant are required in number 16 of the application form.
8. Researchers can only send their applications to conduct research from February to 31 July every year, thereafter no new applications will be accepted.
9. The FSDoE comprises of five districts, namely, Motheo, Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa, Xhariep and Thabo Mofutsanyana.

NB: Upon receiving the application from the researcher the department will review and give feedback to the applicant. Once all the required documents are submitted, the department will recommend the application for approval. The approval and the reviewing process will be done within 30 days from the day of receipt of the

application form. The department will decline the applications with errors and omissions.

PLEASE DO NOT EMAIL ANYTHING IN PICTURE FORMAT AND DO NOT ADD INFORMATION SUCH AS YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE APPLICATION FORM. ONLY ATTACH THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTS.

1. TITLE (Ms, Mrs, Mr, Dr, Prof, etc):

Ms

2. FULL NAME (S) AS APPEARING ON ID

Rearabetswe Connie

3. SURNAME (AS APPEARING ON ID)

Nhlapo

4. TELEPHONE HOME:

N/A

5. TELEPHONE WORK:

N/A

6. TELEPHONE CELL:

0646795773

7. E-MAIL

2623430@students.wits.ac.za

8. ADDRESS HOME:

2109 Sunrise Section

Namahadi

Frankfort

Street Code: 9830

9. ADDRESS WORK:

N/A

Street Code:

10. POSTAL ADDRESS

N/A

Postal Code:

11. NAME OF TERTIARY INSTITUTION / RESEARCH INSTITUTE

University of the Witwatersrand

12. STUDENT NUMBER AND ID NUMBER

2623430

0002280358082

13. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT AND POSITION

Place of employment (Company name): N/A

Position: N/A

14. NAME OF COURSE / QUALIFICATION REGISTERED

Master of Education in Educational Psychology

15. NAME OF SUPERVISOR / PROMOTER & CONTACT DETAILS

Title, Surname and initials: Ms Vorster A

Email: adri.vorster@wits.ac.za

Cell number: 0836501883

Office Telephone number: 0117174554

16. PROJECTS (Research papers, research for non-degree attainment): Only complete this part if your research is a project and involves more than one researcher/s.

Name & Surname	Role in the research project	Contact details/email address
	(co-researcher, student, questionnaire administer, interview facilitator, transcriber)	

17. TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT

Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions

18. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC / STUDY

The South African education system requires the involvement of various professionals who are assigned different roles in supporting the learning and development of learners. Within that system, teachers, and Educational Psychologists (EPs) play an integral role in supporting the development and learning of learners as they are bound by the policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) (Department of Basic Education [DoBE], 2014) to fulfil certain responsibilities in promoting the well-being of learners. Teachers are highly praised and regarded as the pillars of the education system as they possess varying capabilities which are applied in the school setting, aiming at enriching the learning experiences of learners (Leu, 2005). The general responsibility of teachers is found within their name, it is teaching, but the SIAS-policy also assigns them the responsibility of being at the forefront, actively assessing learners with barriers to learning and development, designing and implementing interventions to address these, liaising with School and District-Based Support Teams and only calling on the assistance of other professionals such as EPs if these interventions do not prove sufficiently successful (DoBE, 2014).

As indicated by some research studies conducted in school settings, such as Rothl et al. (2008), EPs are more 'purpose-specific' as they are regarded as the teacher's guide through conducting assessments, designing interventions, and offering counselling services to support the learning and development of learners. As EPs are trained and possess certain skills aligned with child development, it is important to understand from teachers, the kind of support they need from EPs in a school setting from the initial stage of learner assessment, considering that teachers are obliged by policy to be the first point of reference should any learning obstacles concerning a learner arise.

19. VALUE OF RESEARCH AND THE ENVISAGED CONTRIBUTION IT WILL HAVE FOR THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (NOT MORE THAN 100 WORDS)

This study aims to explore township teachers' perceptions on the support required from EPs in the implementation of the requirements set out by the SIAS-policy. By exploring these perceptions, one will be able to offer tailored services in supporting teachers to fulfil the important duties required of them by the SIAS-policy. This study can also potentially contribute to the current literature by addressing some of the shortcomings of published literature when it comes to the working relationship between teachers and EPs at South African public schools.

20. LIST OF SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH.

Please List schools alphabetically per district.

- Write the names of the schools and their districts
- If the space is not enough, please add more rows. Alternatively attach a separate list of schools and districts if they are many.
- Research students, who are educators, are not allowed to conduct research at the school where they are teaching or employed.

Schools	Districts
1. Falesizwe Senior Secondary School	Fezile Dabi
2. Meduwaneng Primary School	Fezile Dabi
3. Tsebo-Ulwazi Secondary School	Fezile Dabi
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

21. LIST OF DIRECTORATES / OFFICIALS IN THE DEPARTMENT INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH.

NB: OFFICIALS INDICATED IN THIS PARAGRAPH SHOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED AS A TARGET GROUP IN PARAGRAPH 22.

Name of Directorate/unit	Name of Official	Position of Official	Role of official in the research
1. Educational Psychology	Zaytoon Amod	Course Coordinator	Facilitate communication with Ethics Committee
2. Clinical Psychology	Carol Long	Head of Department	Reader
3.			
4.			

22. DETAILS OF TARGET GROUP WITH WHOM THE RESEARCH IS TO BE UNDERTAKEN.

Target group/ sampled population	How many? (Number)	Grade (in case of learners and teachers)	Subject (in case of learners and teachers)	Age	Gender	Language (in which the research will be conducted)
1. Teachers	8/9	1-12	Any	Any	Any	English
2.						
3.						
4.						

23. PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW YOU WILL SAFEGUARD MINOR LEARNERS AS PER THE CHILDREN'S ACT.

Which member(s) of the school will also be present during information gathering to ensure the safety of learners?

N/A

24. PLEASE ATTACH DATA GATHERING TOOLS TO BE USED WITH EACH TARGET GROUP (E.G. QUESTIONNAIRES, STANDARDIZED TESTS, INTERVIEWS, OBSERVATIONS, FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND/OR OTHER QUANTITATIVE, QUALITATIVE, PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH STRATEGIES).

Target group	Data gathering method	Group/ Individual	When	Starting time	Finishing time	Number of days per week	Total number of weeks
e.g.: Educators	e.g.: Interview	e.g.: Individual	e.g.: After school	e.g.: 15:30	e.g.: 16:30	e.g.: Once a week	e.g.: 3
Educators	Interview	Individual	After School/ Weekends	13h00	14h00	Once a week	2/3

25. STARTING AND COMPLETION DATES FOR GATHERING DATA AT THE SCHOOL OR PLACE WHERE YOU WILL GATHER DATA FOR THE RESEARCH? (Please bear in mind that research is not allowed to be conducted in schools during the fourth academic term which is

October to December). Researchers are only allowed to collect data in schools starting from the second week of February until 30 September every year.

Dates: _____

26. LIST OF DOCUMENTS TO BE ATTACHED FOR RESEARCH APPLICATION.

The following is the list of documents that should be attached to ensure a thorough and timely processing of the research application. Please indicate the documents you attached by crossing **X** or ticking **✓** in the boxes below.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS	YES	NO	NOT REQUIRED/NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENTS
Proof of registration	✓			
Permission letter and information sheet with consent form to principals	✓			I am still waiting for a permission letter from from Tsebo-Ulwazi.
Permission letter and information sheet with consent form to parents			✓	
Information sheet and consent form for participants	✓			
A copy of a questionnaire			✓	
A list of interview questions	✓			
Ethical Clearance Certificate		✓ Pending		

27. NB: IF ANY OF THE RELEVANT DOCUMENT LISTED ABOVE IS NOT ATTACHED OR YOU HAVE NOT PROVIDED INFORMATION AS NEEDED IN ALL THE PARAGRAPHS, YOUR APPLICATION FORM WILL BE DEEMED NULL AND VOID.

I (full name (s) and surname as appearing on ID document) Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo herewith confirm that all the information in this application form is correct and that I will abide by the ethical code and the conditions prescribed below by the Free State Department of Education.

- I will abide by the ethical research conditions in the discourse of my study in the FSDoE.
- I will not use deception on people participating.
- I will obtain informed consent from all involved in the study.
- I will preserve privacy and confidentiality at all the time.

- I will take special precautions when involving populations which may not be considered to understand fully the purpose of the study.
- I will not offer rewards or enforce binding contracts for the study. This is especially important when people are somehow reliant on the reward.
- I will not skew their conclusions based on funding.
- I will not commit science fraud, falsify research or conduct scientific misconduct.
- My research will follow all regulations given.
- I will not plagiarize the work of others.
- I will abide by the period in which the research has to be done.
- I will apply for extension if I cannot complete the research within the specified period.
- I will not conduct research during the fourth quarter of the academic year.
- I will not disrupt normal learning and teaching times at schools to undertake my research.
- I will submit a bound copy of the research document to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein, upon completion of the research.
- I will upon completion of my research study make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department as per the arrangements of the Department.
- The costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are for my own responsibility.

28. WRITE THE DATE IN WHICH YOU WILL SUBMIT YOUR COMPLETED RESEARCH TO

THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

FULL RESEARCH REPORT, RESEARCH PAPER/ ARTICLE, THESIS OR DISSERTATION

SUBMISSION DATE: 15 March 2024

29. NB: SIGNING OF THIS FORM BY THE SUPERVISOR IS AN INDICATION THAT HE/SHE VERIFIED THE AUTHENTICITY OF THIS APPLICATION, THAT ALL THE ATTACHMENTS WERE SUBMITTED BY HIS/HER STUDENTS AND THAT THE SUPERVISOR WILL ENSURE THE SUBMISSION OF THE COMPLETED RESEARCH TO THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

I (Full Names) Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo declare that I am not listed in the National Register of Sexual Offenders.

RESEARCHER: INITIALS AND SURNAME Nhlapo

SIGNATURE: R.C Nhlapo

DATE:23/06/2023**SUPERVISOR: INITIALS AND
SURNAME**_____**SIGNATURE:** _____**DATE:** _____**(ANNEXURE: B)****ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS: FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The scientific research enterprise is built on a foundation of trust and that the reports by others are valid. The reports should reflect an honest attempt by the researcher to describe the world accurately and without bias; this trust will endure only if the researcher devotes himself or herself to exemplifying and transmitting the values associated with ethical research conduct.

There are many ethical issues to be taken into serious consideration when conducting research. The Free State Department of Education believes that the researchers conducting research in this department would, amongst others, adhere to the following ethical conduct:

1. Be aware of having the responsibility to secure the actual permission and interests of all those involved in the study.
2. Not misuse any of the information discovered.
3. Moral responsibility maintained towards the participants.
4. Embracing corporate social responsibility.
5. Protecting the rights of people in the study as well as their privacy and sensitivity.
6. Confidentiality of those involved in the observation must be carried out, keeping their anonymity and privacy secure.
7. Follow the ethical clearance guideline of the institution that granted such.
8. Reliability.
9. Informing the participants about the importance of the research.
10. 10. Values of trust, fairness and integrity are maintained in the study.
11. The value of transparency is considered.
12. The research is committed to delivering the intended promise as informed by the objectives.
13. The research accentuates the values of reputation and respect.
14. I will not conduct research at the school where I am teaching.
15. I am not listed in the national register of sexual offenders.

**RESEARCHER: INITIALS AND
SURNAME**__Nhlapo_____**SIGNATURE:** R.CNhlapo**DATE:**26/06/2023

**SUPERVISOR: INITIALS AND
SURNAME**_____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Appendix D: Gatekeeper's Permission- Free State Department of Education

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
 Ref: Research Permission: R. C. Nhlapo
 Tel. 051 404 8808
 Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



2109 Sunrise Section
 Namahadi
 Frankfort
 9830

Dear Ms. R. C. Nhlapo

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: FEZILE DABI DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Fezile Dabi Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Witwatersrand are as follows:

Topic: Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions.

1. **List of schools involved:** Falesizwe Senior Secondary School, Meduwaneng Primary School and Tsebo-Ulwazi Secondary School.
2. **Target Population:** Nine teachers teaching in grade 1 to 12 at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2023. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMW. JACOBS
 DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 27/06/2023

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
 Ref: Notification of research; R. C. Nhlapo
 Tel. 051 404 8808
 Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



District Director
 Fezile Dabi District

Dear Dr. Chuta

NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN FEZILE DABI DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that Ms. R. C. Nhlapo has been granted permission to conduct research in the Fezile Dabi District under the auspices of the University of the Witwatersrand. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

Topic: Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions.

1. **List of schools involved:** Falesizwe Senior Secondary School, Meduwaneng Primary School and Tsebo-Ulwazi Secondary School.
2. **Target Population:** Nine teachers teaching in grade 1 to 12 at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2023. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. **Research benefits:** This study aims to explore township teachers' perceptions on the support required from EPs in the implementation of the requirements set out by the SIAS-policy. By exploring these perceptions, one will be able to offer tailored services in supporting teachers to fulfil the important duties required of them by the SIAS-policy. This study can also potentially contribute to the current literature by addressing some of the shortcomings of published literature when it comes to the working relationship between teachers and EPs at South African public schools.
5. The Sub-directorate of Research and policy will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
 DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 27/06/2023

Appendix E: Principal Information Sheet



**SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY**

14 June 2023

For Attention: Principal

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo and I am currently enrolled as a masters student in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree, I am required to conduct research.

I have decided to conduct my research study within the broad area of Inclusive Education; with the title of my research study being **Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions.**

With the permission of the Free State Department of Education, I would like to invite teachers from your school to partake in my study, which will explore township teachers' perceptions on the support required from Educational Psychologists in under-resourced South African schools in assisting teachers to meet the requirements set out in the SIAS-policy. Prior to data collection, participants will be required to sign the participant consent form.

Participation in this study would require approximately 2 to 3 members of your staff to participate in individual interviews. Each of these interviews will be approximately 60 minutes in length. More specifically, conducted with teachers who had gone through the process of assessing and developing an intervention for a learner who was identified as experiencing some learning barrier/s. All interviews will be audio recorded with the permission of the teachers.

Interviews will be conducted at a time and place that are convenient for the individual participants and will not disrupt daily school activities. Participation in this study is voluntary and participants will have the right to withdraw at any time. Participants also have a right not to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with. There are no potential risks or benefits associated with participating in this study. However, should participants feel distressed after the interview as they become more cognisant of the difficulties they

encounter in accommodating different children in a classroom, details of free counselling services will be provided.

Anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed in face-to-face interviews; however, both anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed in writing up the findings and publishing these. In this regard, participants' names will be changed, and pseudonyms will be adopted in the write up of the results. These pseudonyms will in no manner be traced back to the participants' identities including the direct quotes that will be used in the publication of the findings. You, and your school will also remain anonymous in the publication of the findings.

The transcribed interviews will be anonymous and will only be seen by me and my research supervisor and will be kept on a password protected computer; as will the actual interviews. In this manner unauthorised access of the raw data and the transcriptions will be prevented. Once the study is completed, the collected data will be kept for future research to be used as secondary data with the permission of the participants.

Results will be reported in the form of a research report and may be published in peer-reviewed journals or presented at conferences. Please note that this research report will be placed online in WiredSpace - the University of the Witwatersrand Online Research repository where it can be accessed by registered WITS students. On request, a summary of the results can be emailed to you 6 months after having conducted the interviews.

This summary will also be forwarded to the Free State Department of Education who has given their permission for the research to be conducted within the Free State province.

If you agree to me contacting your staff members to recruit potential participants for this research study, please indicate this on your school's letterhead.

Your involvement in my study will be sincerely appreciated.

Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo
 Researcher and M.ED Student
 064 679 5773
2623430@students.wits.ac.za



Ms. Adri Vorster
 Research Supervisor
 011 717 4554
adri.vorster@wits.ac.za

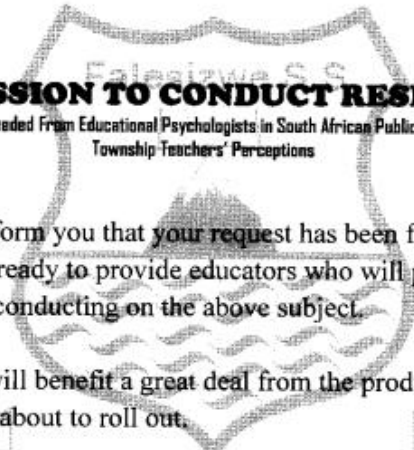
Appendix F: Gatekeeper's Permission- School Principals

 P O Box 550 1221 Maboya Street Frankfort 9830	 admin@falesizwe.co.za  +27 (0)58 0500 741  www.falesizwe.co.za  Falesizwe Senior Secondary School	
--	---	---

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL

Ms RC Nhlapo
Reasearcher and M. ED Student
Wits

Dear Ms Nhlapo

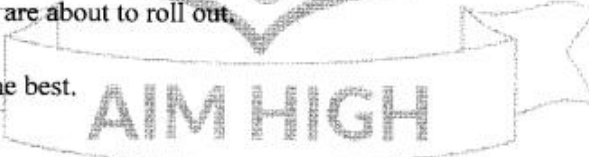


PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
Support Needed From Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools :
Township Teachers' Perceptions

It is my pleasure to inform you that your request has been favourably considered. Consequently, we are ready to provide educators who will participate in the interview you will be conducting on the above subject.

We hope our system will benefit a great deal from the product that will come out of the process you are about to roll out.

We wish you all the best.



Yours sincerely



2023/06/23
P Motloutung
(Principal)

FALESIZWE SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL
P.O. BOX 550 FRANKFORT 9830

23 -06- 2023

TEL: 058 0500 741
falesizweschool@gmail.com

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Inbox



Rearabetswe Nhlapo <2623430@students.wits.ac.za>

11:23 AM (1
hour ago)

to Meduwanengps1@gmail.com

Dear Principal

I trust this email finds you well.

I am Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo, and I am currently doing my Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am required to conduct research as part of my degree; hence, I am asking for permission to conduct my research at your school. Further detail of my research is outlined in the attached information letter.

I can only get ethical clearance and start collecting data once the Wits Internal Ethics Committee has received permission letters from the schools where I will be doing my research. Thus, I would like to kindly request that should you approve my request, you provide me with a signed letter on the school's letterhead indicating the following:

I, DR. IVONNE MAKUE, hereby consent to Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo collecting data for her research project, entitled Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions at our school. I understand that she will contact the teachers at our school and invite them to partake in her study.

Please find attached the information letter and the letter confirming the approval of my research proposal. Please note that the collection of data will only commence once ethical clearance has been obtained. At such time, I will forward you my ethics approval letter.

Kind Regards,
Rearabetswe



**TSEBO
ULWAZI**

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Tel/Fax : 072 384 2700

P.O.Box 302

Frankfort

09300



23 JUNE 2023

Enq: RS Sebiloiane

Contact NO. 072 384 2700

University of Witwatersrand

Johannesburg

Department: SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I, Ramodioanyana Samuel Sebiloiane, the principal of the above mentioned school, hereby consent to Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo collecting data for her research project, entitled Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions at our school. I understand that she will contact the teachers at our school and invite them to partake in her study.

I hope you will find the above in order.

Regards

TSEBO ULWAZI SEC. SCHOOL	
1172 RS Sebiloiane	FRANKFORT 9830
TEL: 058 150 0743	
23-06-2023	
e-mail: ulwazitsebo@gmail.com	
CELL:	
PRINCIPAL:	

Appendix G: Ethics Certificate



SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: MED/23/04

PROJECT TITLE:

Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions.

INVESTIGATOR

Nhlapo Rearabetswe (2623430)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

SHCD/Psychology

DATE CONSIDERED

05 June 2023

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL

Low Risk

EXPIRY DATE

31 December 2025

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

05 July 2023

CHAIRPERSON

Aline Ferreira Correia
(Dr Aline Ferreira Correia)

cc: Ms Adri Vorster (Supervisor)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee.

Signature _____

Date _____

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix H: Participant Information Sheet



**SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY**

14 June 2023

For Attention: Educator

RE: RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

My name is Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo and I am currently enrolled as a masters student in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree, I am required to conduct research.

I have decided to conduct my research study within the broad area of Inclusive Education; with the title of my research study being **Support Needed from Educational Psychologists in South African Public Schools: Township Teachers' Perceptions.**

With the permission of the Free State Department of Education and your school principal, I would like to invite you to partake in my study which will explore township teachers' perceptions on the support required from Educational Psychologists in under-resourced South African schools in assisting teachers to meet the requirements set out in the SIAS policy. Prior to data collection, you will be required to sign the Participant Consent Form.

Participation in this study would require you to participate in an individual interview. This interview will be approximately 60 minutes in length and will be at a time that is convenient for you and that will not impact on your commitments as an educator. It will also be conducted in a space convenient for you. All interviews will be audio recorded with your permission.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. You also have a right not to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with. There are no potential risks or benefits associated with participating in this study and you will not be disadvantaged or advantaged for deciding to partake in the research or for refusing to do so.

If you feel overwhelmed after the interview and become cognisant towards your needs as an educator, as well as all the challenges you encounter on a daily basis, please feel free to call any of the free counselling services listed below:

- a) The South African Depression and Anxiety Group – 0800 567 567 / 011 262 6396
- b) Lifeline Southern Africa – 0861 322 322

Anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed in face-to-face interviews; however, both anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed in writing up the findings and publishing these. In this regard, your name will be changed, and a pseudonym will be adopted in writing up the results. This pseudonym will in no manner be traced back to you and should I decide to use some of the information you provide during the interview in the form of a direct quote, I will ensure that this can also not be traced back to you in any way. Your school will also remain anonymous in the publication of the findings.

The transcribed interviews will be anonymous and will only be seen by me and my research supervisor and will be kept on a password protected computer; as will the actual interviews. In this manner unauthorised access of the raw data and the transcriptions will be prevented. Once the study is completed, the collected data will be kept for future research to be used as secondary data with your permission.

Results will be reported in the form of a research report and may be published in peer-reviewed journals or presented at conferences. Please note that this research report will be placed online in WiredSpace - the University of the Witwatersrand Online Research repository where it can be accessed by registered WITS students. On request, a summary of the results can be emailed to you 6 months after having conducted the interviews. This summary will also be forwarded to your principal, as well as the Free State Department of Education who has given their permission for the research to be conducted within the Free State province.

If you agree to participate in this research, please complete the attached consent form.

Your involvement in my study would be sincerely appreciated.

Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo
 Researcher and M.ED Student
 064 679 5773
2623430@students.wits.ac.za



Ms. Adri Vorster
 Research Supervisor
 011 717 4554
adri.vorster@wits.ac.za

Appendix I: Participant Interview Consent Form



CONSENT TO BE INTERVIEWED

I, _____ hereby consent to allowing

Rearabetswe Connie Nhlapo to conduct an interview with me surrounding the support needed from Educational Psychologists in township schools in supporting teachers to meet the requirements set out in the SIAS policy.

You are required to sign at the end after going through the following points:

☐ I am fully aware that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I am also aware that I am not obliged to answer questions with which I do not feel comfortable.

☐ I am further aware that my responses will be kept confidential and anonymous during the write up of the findings. Should any direct quotes from my interview be used, I am aware that a pseudonym will be ascribed to me so that these quotes cannot be traced directly back to me.

☐ There are no potential risks or benefits associated with participating in this study and I will not be disadvantaged or advantaged for deciding to partake in the research or for refusing to do so.

☐ I am aware that my anonymised interview transcription will be seen by the researcher and her supervisor, but will be kept on a password protected computer to avoid any unauthorised access.

☐ I am aware that results will be published in the form of a research report and might be published in a peer reviewed journal article and/or presented at a conference.

☐ I am aware that I can ask the researcher for a summary of the results and that this will also be forwarded to my principal and the Free Department of Education.

☐ I give full permission for my provided data to be kept anonymously and used for future research as secondary data.

Participant

Researcher

Date:

Date:

Appendix J: Participant Interview Audio Recording Consent Form



CONSENT TO BE AUDIO-RECORDED

I, _____ fully consent to being audio-recorded during the interview so that my experiences can be transcribed and used in the research report and/or any publications that may arise there from. I am aware that the interview transcripts will be kept safe from unauthorised access via a password protected computer. Finally, I am aware that my recordings will only be accessed by the researcher and her supervisor.

Participant

Researcher

Date:

Date: