



# Strategies to Improve School-Based Support Towards Access and Success of Rural Learners

Adziliwi Martha Netshipale<sup>1</sup> , Lloyd Daniel Nkoli Tlale<sup>1</sup>   
& Thembi AL Phala<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> University of South Africa.

## ABSTRACT

Rural schools are susceptible to various challenges due to their geographical locations, which places them far from the resources and amenities necessary for teaching and learning. This creates barriers that impede access to and success in education. To address these, schools require specific interventions or approaches that target contextual challenges and rely on the availability and functionality of support systems. This paper aimed to outline the school-based support strategy that can be used to reinforce support initiatives at the school level to promote access to and improve success in education. The paper emanates from a study that adopted a qualitative approach, interpretivism paradigm and instrumental case study design. Data was collected through questionnaires, field notes, focus groups and individual interviews with 35 participants in five rural schools in Gauteng North district, South Africa. The findings revealed that three out of five schools did not have functional school-based support teams in place and conducted unstructured and disorganised support services in silos. Non-functionality of support teams was attributed to time constraints, misalignment of policies with rural contexts, inadequate educational resources and inadequacies of teachers' skills and capabilities. The study recommends reinforcement of support services through a school-based support strategy with five pillars of support. The findings contribute to existing discussions around school-based support in education and its role in educational achievement and accessibility of learning opportunities. Findings also pave the way for further studies that employ different methodologies to expand the existing knowledge.

## Correspondence

Lloyd Daniel Nkoli Tlale

Email: [tlaleldn@unisa.ac.za](mailto:tlaleldn@unisa.ac.za)

## Publication History

Received: 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2024

Accepted: 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

Published online:

7<sup>th</sup> February, 2025

*Keywords: Intervention Measures Learner Support, Educational Success, Learning Needs.*

## INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that there has not been a significant improvement in learner performance in rural schools,<sup>1</sup> and that performance gaps, which are mostly attributed to inadequate resource provision,

<sup>1</sup> Kai Zhao, "Rural-Urban Gap in Academic Performance at a Highly Selective Chinese University: Variations and Determinants," *Higher Education Research & Development* 41, no. 1 (2022): 177–92; Pierre Du Plessis and Raj Mestry, "Teachers for Rural Schools— a Challenge for South Africa," *South African Journal of Education* 39 (2019).

socio-economic conditions and parental involvement, exist between rural and urban schools.<sup>2</sup> Such performance gaps are usually exhibited through learners' inability to read for meaning and perform well on other tasks as compared to their urban counterparts. According to 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (2021 PIRLS) results, 81% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa cannot read for meaning in any language, including their home languages.<sup>3</sup> Cekiso et al. supported this finding when their study revealed a lack of notable reading performance of rural learners.<sup>4</sup>

Ajani, found a lack of resources and inadequate support towards school principals as some of the contributing factors in poor curriculum delivery, which impeded learner performance in some South African rural secondary schools.<sup>5</sup> Uleanya, Smith, and Gamede, claim that factors affecting success in curriculum delivery include the non-involvement of teachers in curriculum development, inadequate resources and infrastructure, and teachers' workload, which result in time constraints.<sup>6</sup> In addition to social barriers, rural learners have more odds stacked against them.<sup>7</sup> These factors impede access to education and subsequent educational success.

Access is also one of the fundamental aspects of educational success that South African rural schools still grapple with. According to the announcements, tabling, and committee reports of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, "Children with special needs attend mainstream schools due to unavailability and inaccessibility of special needs schools."<sup>8</sup> This is exacerbated by teachers' inability to adequately support these learners due to lack of suitable capabilities, skills and qualifications to cater for the needs of learners with special education needs. These challenges restrict access to equitable education, which ultimately affects educational achievements. Since building additional special schools might be challenging due to financial constraints, it will be an advantage to tackle changes that might not pose hefty financial implications such as capacitating teachers with relevant skills and knowledge. For example, teachers' qualifications, training and competencies in specialised areas such as Braille, Autism, and South African Sign Language need to be prioritised to promote the inclusion, access, and success of rural learners.

The school-based support strategy seeks to strengthen existing support structures by mobilizing support, resources, involvement and participation by all stakeholders. Mobilising support will provide teachers with reliable pillars that aid their efforts of promoting the accessibility of learning opportunities and attainment of educational goals by rural learners. Various deficiencies were objectively identified in each pillar of support that necessitated the development of this support strategy. The objective was to ensure that the strategy adopts a holistic approach to strengthening existing reinforcements.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There is not enough literature on school-based support strategies in the South African context. The current paper is, therefore, well-positioned as a valuable contribution to knowledge. Literature related to strategies designed to improve school-based support towards access and success of rural learners will be briefly reviewed below.

---

<sup>2</sup> Elock Emvula Shikalepo, "Attributes Underlying Learner Performance in Rural Schools: The Perspectives of Rural School Teachers in Namibia," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Education and Research* 5, no. 1 (2020): 6–11.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Basic Education, *PIRLS 2021: South African Preliminary Highlights Report* (Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Madoda Cekiso et al., "Factors Affecting Grade 6 Learners' Reading Performance in a Rural School in Maluti, South Africa," *Reading & Writing-Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa* 13, no. 1 (2022): 327.

<sup>5</sup> Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani, "Challenges Mitigating against Effective Adoption and Usage of E-Learning in Curriculum Delivery in South African Universities," *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*, no. 2 (38) (2023).

<sup>6</sup> Chinaza Uleanya, Vincent Smith, and Bongani Thulani Gamede, "Leadership Issues: Investigation of the Etiology of Curriculum Delivery in Rural Institutions of Learning," *SAGE Open* 13, no. 3 (2023): 21582440231193564.

<sup>7</sup> Abeer Aidh Alshwiah, "Barriers to Online Learning: Adjusting to the 'New Normal' in the Time of COVID-19," *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education* 22, no. 4 (2021): 212–28.

<sup>8</sup> Republic of South Africa, *Report of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, No. 140 of 18* (Pretoria, 2023), 12.

Owen et al., found that support strategies influence learner performance.<sup>9</sup> The paper revolves around a project initiated to improve numeracy in schools. The strategy involved teacher training and continuous support towards schools. The findings of the study revealed that effective implementation of support strategies “has a positive effect on children’s fluency in basic mathematics skills”. Although the context differs significantly from that of the South African rural schools, the results of the study demonstrate that the development and implementation of support strategies can bear positive results. A study by Mason et al. explored the impact of a school-based capacity-building program called Family Connect.<sup>10</sup> Caregivers were trained in the provision of support towards children’s well-being to assist them with coping, sleep and academic behaviour around schoolwork. The outcome of the programme showed positive interest from parents and caregivers. However, the authors also revealed a significant dropout from the programme due to feasibility-related challenges. The findings of this study suggest that even though support strategies have good intentions, they might not produce desired outcomes due to developmental, participation and implementation-related challenges.

School-based support program aimed at catering to learner diversity in gifted education implemented in Hong Kong was found to significantly enhance diversity in learning through collaboration.<sup>11</sup> This program was introduced to support gifted learners with their psychosocial and educational needs. Its effectiveness is an indication that support strategies can produce positive effects when accurately implemented. Easterly et al., share similar sentiments, their study revealed the positive effects of the school-based agricultural programme.<sup>12</sup> They found that the programme assisted schools in achieving their educational goals. Integrative teaching of reading strategies was found to improve basic mathematical problem-solving skills by Hamidi et al.<sup>13</sup> Their finding suggests the importance of support strategies in education. Al-Shammari, concurs when stating that Humanism-based Instructional Strategies are effective in inclusive education.<sup>14</sup>

Chehaib, Rodríguez-Campos and Todd, concur that school-based programmes designed to improve mental health in children strategies achieved their goal.<sup>15</sup> These authors proceeded to assert that variables such as teacher training, collaboration and availability of resources are critical to the success of any support strategy. This is the view shared by the school-based support strategy – pillars of support that would be outlined below.

The common thread that connects the reviewed studies above is that the development and implementation of school-based support strategies can promote accessibility of education and achievement of educational goals. The key is in the feasibility of strategies initiated in terms of reasonableness to implement and attain set goals. Although the reviewed studies demonstrated the importance of school-based support strategies in education, neither of them focused precisely on the support strategies aimed at the promotion of educational access and success in rural contexts. This, therefore, suggests literature gaps that the current strategy intends to address.

The school-based support strategy emerged from a study conducted in 5 rural secondary schools in Gauteng Province as part of the requirements for a PhD Thesis by Netshipale in 2023. The results of the study revealed dysfunctional school-based support teams and teachers, learners and teaching and learning that are not adequately supported. In addition, schools are faced with a myriad of challenges such as a lack of parental involvement, inadequate educational resources, time

<sup>9</sup> Kaydee L Owen et al., “Implementation Support Improves Outcomes of a Fluency-Based Mathematics Strategy: A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial,” *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 14, no. 3 (2021): 523–42, 536.

<sup>10</sup> Susan M Mason et al., “Building School-Based Capacity to Support Parenting: Challenges and Lessons Learned,” *School Mental Health* 15, no. 3 (2023): 886–99.

<sup>11</sup> João Marôco et al., “Predictors of Academic Efficacy and Dropout Intention in University Students: Can Engagement Suppress Burnout?,” *PLOS ONE* 15, no. 10 (October 29, 2020): 633, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239816>.

<sup>12</sup> R G Tre Easterly et al., “Examining How Principals Support School-Based Agricultural Education Programs,” *Journal of Agricultural Education* 64, no. 2 (2023): 162–75.

<sup>13</sup> Farideh Hamidi et al., “Teaching Mathematics Based on Integrating Reading Strategies and Working Memory in Elementary School,” *Athens Journal of Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 9–22.

<sup>14</sup> Zaid N Al-Shammari, “Applying Humanism-Based Instructional Strategies in Inclusive Education Schools,” *Education Quarterly Reviews* 4, no. 2 (2021): 629–31.

<sup>15</sup> Hiba Chehaib, Liliana Rodríguez-Campos, and Anjanette Todd, “Evaluation of a School-Based Program Designed to Improve the Mental Health in Children: A Collaborative Approach,” *School Community Journal* 33, no. 1 (2023): 229–50.

constraints and one-size-fits-all policies. The results suggest that deficiencies exist in the support systems. Addressing these shortcomings will enhance school-based support services in education. The goal of this strategy is to improve the effectiveness of support activities rendered by parents, stakeholders, communities, school-based and district-based support teams.

School-based support is influenced by the school environment, socioeconomic conditions, stakeholder engagement and involvement, resources, and teachers' capabilities. When these factors are in disarray, they produce unfavourable teaching and learning environments. The negativity imposed by these factors combined with social barriers disrupt children's potential to learn optimally and achieve their educational goals.<sup>16</sup> These aspects become impediments when compounded by inadequacies and deficiencies of existing support systems.

The key to improving school-based support towards access and success of rural learners lies in addressing potential hindrances and in this case, teacher development, parental, community and stakeholder involvement, resources, policy alignment and monitoring and evaluation. Addressing flaws in these pillars could result in a positive teaching and learning environment characterized by capacitated schools in terms of skills and resources, participation, engagement and collaboration.<sup>17</sup> The strategy is based on the principles of Wenger's Community of Practice theory, which maintains that interaction or engagement between individuals bound by the specific domain of knowledge, common goals and interests have the potential to improve their practices in their respective spaces.<sup>18</sup> Similar principles apply in educational environments where schools form communities among themselves, with parents and other stakeholders to support educational activities. Such collaborations facilitate the establishment of support structures, sustenance of such structures and development of intervention mechanisms necessary to transform the educational landscape.

### **Objectives of School-Based Support Strategy**

The focus of the school-based support strategy is to strengthen existing support systems and capacitate schools to put systems in place to aid the achievement of educational goals. Different strands identified in this strategy are building blocks that need to be systematised to form a whole. Each pillar has strengths that schools can capitalise on to transform teaching and learning delivery and environment. All that is required is to draw opportunities from each pillar to enhance educational activities. It is, therefore, important to harness available opportunities presented by each pillar to reinforce schools' efforts to address educational challenges and exploit supports at their disposal. Addressing deficiencies in the pillars of support will not only allow schools to initiate and source interventions at their disposal but also promote self-sufficiency and curtail reliance on the government to satisfy every educational need. The strategy will be guided by several objectives to ensure that it targets critical support areas.

The objectives of the school-based support strategy are as follows:

- To capacitate schools in the establishment and sustenance of functional school-based support teams.
- To heighten parents' awareness of their role in education, particularly in creating home environments conducive to continuous learning.
- To mobilise support from other educational stakeholders such as community and sister departments that offer essential services.
- To strengthen existing infrastructure or resources such as scholar transport to create enabling conditions for continuous teaching and learning and interventions such as extra classes.
- To upscale teacher training to also focus on programmes that promote inclusion such as basic sign language training programmes.

---

<sup>16</sup> Alshwiah, "Barriers to Online Learning: Adjusting to the 'New Normal' in the Time of COVID-19."

<sup>17</sup> Hadley F Bachman et al., "The Role of Parents during the Middle School Years: Strategies for Teachers to Support Middle School Family Engagement," *School Community Journal* 31, no. 1 (2021): 109–26.

<sup>18</sup> Donna M Brinton et al., "Establishing and Sustaining a Community of Practice.," *CATESOL Journal* 32, no. 1 (2021): 133–43.

- To harness existing support services such as teacher assistance employed in schools to address teachers' time constraints.
- To foster learning through social interaction, engagement, or mentoring programmes.
- To raise awareness on the importance of aligning policies to rural contexts and for those policies to make provision so resources required for their implementation.

To realise the above-mentioned objectives, the parties involved will be required to play their roles effectively. The success of any strategy also relies on assigning responsibilities to those involved in its implementation. Assigning roles and responsibilities does not only aid in accountability and ensuring the contribution of each member, but it also enhances self-motivation.<sup>19</sup> It leads to the attainment of goals and ensures that each planned activity is catered for.<sup>20</sup> Schools should establish their own teams that will be responsible for carrying out various activities. Everyone will provide a report during the monitoring and evaluation stages to account for progress and challenges. The discussion section of this paper will provide a framework to enhance the implementation of the school-based support strategy.

## METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach and instrumental case study design were used to explore authentic situations in authentic environments.<sup>21</sup> Multiple data collection tools that produced sufficient data for interpretations were used.<sup>22</sup> Purposeful sampling was used to select information-rich participants. 35 participants were easily accessible for sampling.<sup>23</sup> The sample was selected from a larger population of schools in South Africa, and they comprised 15 school-based support teams, 10 members of school governing bodies, 5 district-based support teams and 5 principals.

Focus groups, individual interviews, open-ended questionnaires and field notes were used to collect the data. There were 5 focus group sessions (1 per school) made of 6 participants each. There were 5 individual interviews conducted with district-based support team members. Open-ended questionnaires were self-administered by all 35 participants. Descriptive field notes taken provided additional data that would not have been obtained by any other means.<sup>24</sup> Schools and the district office were used as research sites.

Content method of data analysis was used, which assisted in the "validation of the accuracy of results" and narrative reporting.<sup>25</sup> Themes were developed, and concepts and words appearing in the data were identified.<sup>26</sup>

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa (UNISA). Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Gauteng Department of Education. The study adhered to all codes of conduct and did not pose any physical or emotional harm to anyone. Participants

---

<sup>19</sup> Marta Leyton Román, Susana Lobato Muñoz, and Ruth Jiménez Castuera, "The Importance of Assigning Responsibility during Evaluation in Order to Increase Student Satisfaction from Physical Education Classes: A Structural Equation Model," *PloS One* 14, no. 9 (2019): e0209398.

<sup>20</sup> Stephan De Beer, "Constructing an Urban Theology of Liberation in South Africa Today: A Transdisciplinary Praxis-Approach in the Interface between (Urban) Faith, Politics and Planning," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 51, no. 1 (2023): 85–114.

<sup>21</sup> Keshona T Beasley and Carianne Bernadowski, "An Examination of Reading Specialist Candidates' Knowledge and Self-Efficacy in Behavior and Classroom Management: An Instrumental Case Study," *Education Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2019): 76.

<sup>22</sup> C I Ugwu, J N Ekere, and Chioma Onoh, "Research Paradigms and Methodological Choices in the Research Process," *Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology* 14, no. 2 (2021): 116–24.

<sup>23</sup> Khim Raj Subedi, "Determining the Sample in Qualitative Research.," *Online Submission* 4 (2021): 1–13.

<sup>24</sup> Haji Karim Khan, "Conducting Narrative Studies in Pakistan: Reflections from the Field.," *Journal of Education and Educational Development* 7, no. 1 (2020): 177–83.

<sup>25</sup> Aisha Ibrahim Ningi, "Data Presentation in Qualitative Research: The Outcomes of the Pattern of Ideas with the Raw Data," *International Journal of Qualitative Research* 1, no. 3 (2022): 197–198.

<sup>26</sup> George N Shava et al., "Qualitative Content Analysis, Utility, Usability and Processes in Educational Research," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 5, no. 7 (2021): 553–58.

gave written consent and were allowed to decline participation. Truthful observations and findings were reported. Interviews were conducted in safe and secure environments. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study revealed that 3 out of 5 schools that participated in the study did not have functional support teams in place. The other 2 schools did not have support teams in place at all. A focus group participant from one school revealed that, *“Our school recently changed School-Based Support Team structure because the old one was not inclusive; it did not include all the necessary stakeholders. The new team is not yet 100% functional....”* Participating schools operate within similar contexts and encounter identical socioeconomic, resource and facility challenges yet they have divergent practices with regards to school-based support.

Participant’s revelation that they do not always adhere to prescripts for the provision of support in their schools demonstrates inconsistencies in practices of schools from the same district in relation to the creation of meaningful learning opportunities. Their inability to establish and maintain functional support teams sabotages their efforts to improve support services in their schools. The finding suggests the existence of certain intricacies that impede the promotion of access to learning and educational success.

Findings revealed a myriad of challenges that obstruct schools from establishing and maintaining functional school-based support teams such as time constraints, lack of educational resources and inadequate teachers’ competencies and capabilities. Participants emphasised that they do not have sufficient time to conduct other activities outside of their classrooms. *“The school-based support in our school is partially functional due to time constraints. We do not have enough time to teach and still perform school-based support team functions”*.

Teachers indicated that they are overloaded with curriculum implementation responsibilities, such that they do not have sufficient time to devote to support activities. If they must choose between completing their syllabus and providing support to learners with additional needs, they will always choose learning content because it is their priority. This is evident from a response from a focus group participant in another school who stated that *“.....teachers find it time-consuming to follow all these steps which means that some learners will still come to school with their challenges which will not be attended to”*. Another participant added that *“a teacher who identifies a learning barrier or problem is the one who is supposed to see to it that all the steps are followed through. Some teachers are not prepared or willing to do that because it takes their time, they could be finishing their syllabus. This means that learning barriers experienced by these learners will not be addressed or no referrals will be made at all”*.

All these statements demonstrate that teachers do not devote their teaching and learning time to other essential learner support activities. They are unwilling to compromise their teaching and learning time for other activities that are equally essential in education. This is one of the challenges that impedes the sustenance and effectiveness of existing school-based support initiatives.

Time constraints and inadequate capacity are compounded by dysfunctional home environments that are not conducive to the continuation of learning. Participants indicated that their learners come from dysfunctional families. For example, some learners are orphaned, have one parent, live with grandparents or extended family members and some parents work far from home. A focus group participant stated that *“.... some learners in this school come from child-headed families. This is challenging because such learners cannot give it their all at school. They have family problems that they are faced with daily”*. Such environments imply that there will be no continuation of learning at home. They reiterated the importance of parental involvement at home and school if school-based support teams were to function optimally.

Participants were of the view that parents do not always support their plight to identify and address barriers to learning. They attributed the lack of involvement to various factors including socio-economic constraints, lack of education or knowledge and child-headed families. The following is a

statement from one of the participants regarding factors that contribute to lower performance in schools: *“The community around here is very poor and parents are not that educated. Because they have lower levels of education, they are not really interested in education...., it is poverty that makes them lose interest in education”*. Most parents do not have jobs, they rely on social grants, and this causes a lack of motivation and interest” ...” These responses suggest that schools carry teaching, learning and support load without the involvement of their critical stakeholders such as parents or families. As times change, new areas of concern caused by various external circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic emerge and in conjunction with lack of stakeholder involvement, existing challenges are exacerbated. Consequently, support initiatives suffer.

Policy mandates that are not designed to address contextual impediments such as socio-economic conditions and time constraints were cited as inhibitors of effective and functional support teams. According to one of the district-based support team members, policies do not always cater to rural contexts. *“... There should not be a cut-and-dry strategy (one-size-fits-all) when it comes to policies”*. Policy mandates are not accompanied by resources or identify the location of resources. It becomes the responsibility of teachers, who are not adequately capacitated and supported, to assemble the required resources. This implies that only well-resourced schools in urban areas are better positioned to execute the mandates

Some schools respond satisfactorily to the intervention strategies recommended by the Department of Basic Education, such as the use of appropriate forms in identifying learning needs and the mandatory establishment of functional school-based support teams. However, others lamented that the form is too long and time-consuming. Consequently, they do not adhere to prescripts even if they identify additional learning needs. One focus group member stated the following: *“...some teachers are even too lazy to do all the steps and as a result, they will ignore the problem or challenge that the learner is facing. The main cause of this laziness comes from the number of steps that the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy requires teachers to follow from identifying problems to addressing them. Some teachers find it time-consuming to follow all these steps which means that some learners will still come to school with their challenges which will not be attended to.”*

The above statement also links to the previous one that teachers do not have sufficient time to devote to anything else outside of teaching and learning. They cannot afford to compromise their time and attend to other activities despite the importance of those activities. Schools appear to be frustrated by inadequate support, lack of resources and capacity.

Despite these challenges, some teachers were found to promote inclusion and access to education by accommodating disabled learners or those with additional support needs and ensuring their participation in classroom activities. These teachers indicated that they make efforts to promote inclusivity with their limited skills, resources, support and time. For example, *“We also have short-sighted learners or those with hearing impairment. We support these learners by sitting them at the front of the class to ensure that they can read lips or see clearly what is written on the chalkboard”*. These efforts signify that schools’ attempts to address deficiencies in their support systems to assist in bridging educational gaps. Such teachers were able to achieve some level of success with limited support and resources, which suggests greater achievements could be attained if they are adequately supported. Intensifying support services towards these schools will lead to favourable outcomes that will enhance access and success in education.<sup>27</sup>

The South African government has put support structures in place to assist school management, teaching and learning and to improve educational access and success. For example, school-governing bodies, school-based and district-based support teams were established to assist in transforming schools and management and in supporting teaching and learning.<sup>28</sup> These and other structures were

<sup>27</sup> Theresa Lydia Badiktsie Manzini, “The Support of Juvenile Offender Learners in Correctional Centre Schools: A Spiritual Wellness Perspective.” *European Journal of Education (EJED)* 3, no. 1 (2020): 90–105.

<sup>28</sup> Nuraan Davids, “Governance in South African Schools: Democratic Advancement or Hindrance?,” *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 50, no. 3 (2022): 436–51.

intended to bridge inequality and performance gaps between schools in urban areas and those in marginalised or disadvantaged communities. However, judging by participants' responses, these support systems are insufficient in sustaining effective teaching and learning activities, more so in the current era where there is an emergence of various extenuating circumstances that hamper efforts to promote equitable education.

School-based and district-based support teams are responsible for the transformation of school management, enhancement of teaching and learning and bridging of inequality and performance gaps between schools in different socio-economic environments.<sup>29</sup> It has become increasingly challenging for these support structures to render effective support due emergence of various extenuating circumstances such as children's sexual orientations, pandemics and other demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The findings of the study demonstrate a need for approaches that can aid the management and resolution of educational impediments. Alternatively, existing support mechanisms that have been proven to be successful could be revived and reinforced to ensure that they are aligned with current educational trends. Based on the above discussions, it was deemed necessary to develop a to improve school-based support toward access and success of rural learners. Discussions below will focus on the pillars of the strategy to improve school-based support toward access and success of rural learners.

#### Pillars of School-Based Support Strategy

The strategy is comprised of 5 pillars that encompass all spheres of influence and view school-based support from a holistic perspective. The pillars of support in the school-based support strategy have the potential to accelerate school-based support in rural schools. There were various deficiencies identified in the pillars of the school-based support strategy, which could be reinforced through efforts of collaboration, engagement, participation and active involvement.

The school-based support strategy is underpinned by the principles of Wenger's Community of Practice theory, which asserts that positive influence among members of a community can be attained through collaboration, partnerships, participation and engagement.<sup>30</sup> Meaningful interaction between schools and educational stakeholders who share common goals, concerns and interests, promotes support and development. Their regular engagement can be beneficial because their interaction provides a platform for sharing ideas or best practices, capacitating each other and devising solutions to their shared concerns.<sup>31</sup> The desired outcomes or effects could be the enrichment of practices and the attainment of set goals. The school-based support strategy that emanated from the findings discussed above will be outlined below.

---

<sup>29</sup> Davids, "Governance in South African Schools: Democratic Advancement or Hindrance?"

<sup>30</sup> Brinton et al., "Establishing and Sustaining a Community of Practice."

<sup>31</sup> Brinton et al., "Establishing and Sustaining a Community of Practice."

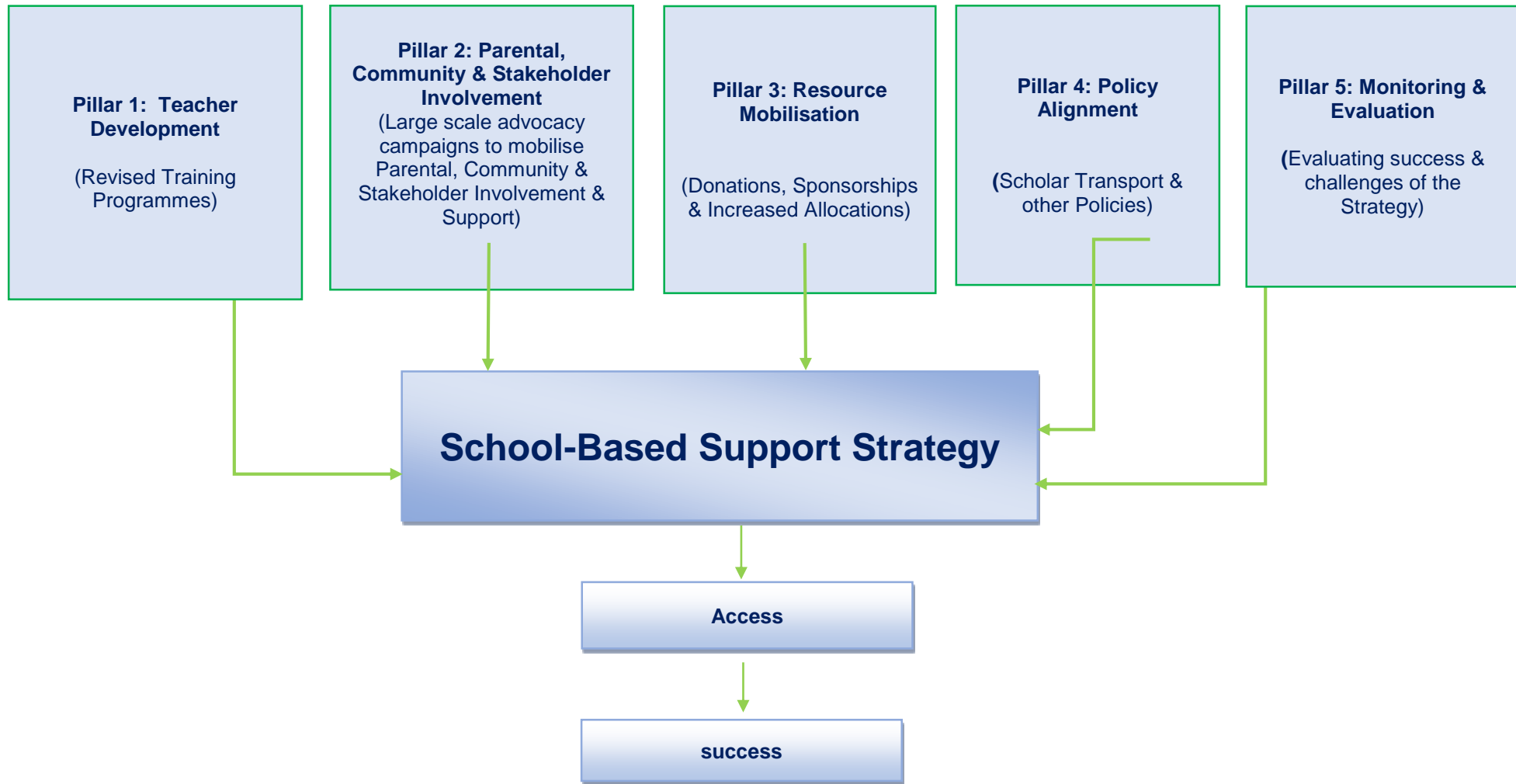


Figure 1: Pillars of School-Based Support

## Implementation Process

The school-based support strategy is a precursor to the implementation plan. Each school should develop its plan of action based on the capacity, time and resources at its disposal. The implementation plan cannot be a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. It should consider contextual factors. Although rural schools encounter similar challenges, some schools can manoeuvre their obstacles better than others. It is therefore important that each school develops its plan based on its specific contextual landscapes. It will be the responsibility of districts to support their schools to develop implementation plans suitable for their environment. The implementation plan will be accompanied by a reporting template that will be used to provide quality progress to districts.

The goal of any strategy is to provide a blueprint that guides organisations to implement programmes successfully, enhance their operations and achieve their goals. Implementing a strategy is the translation of plans, procedures, programmes, or systems into action.<sup>32</sup> Implementation of the plans that have been developed should start. This process involves carrying out activities outlined in the strategy to deliver its mandates. The success of any strategy in realising its goals and objectives is dependent on its implementation.<sup>33</sup> Effective implementation requires reliable, committed, and competent individuals.

It is critical that before the implementation process resumes, individuals who are key to its implementation, the resources that will be required, the channels of communication that will be employed, and how progress will be evaluated are identified.<sup>34</sup> Implementation of any programme in any organisation also requires commitment, capabilities, and an understanding of the roles, and responsibilities supposed to be implemented. Key individuals should be identified and assigned roles and time frames for various implementation activities.

School-based support strategy is composed of five pillars, which are teacher development, parental and stakeholder involvement, adequate resource allocation, policy alignment and monitoring and evaluation. The study conducted in five (5) secondary schools in the Tshwane North district of Gauteng province revealed deficiencies in each pillar that hinder the effectiveness of any intervention strategy employed. It is envisaged that addressing those deficiencies will contribute to improving school-based support. In the sections that follow, processes and activities that will be undertaken in the implementation of the five pillars of the school-based support strategy will be outlined. The processes will lay out the coordinated activities that will be carried out to capacitate existing support mechanisms.

### Pillar 1: Teacher development

Teachers are curriculum and policy implementers at the school level and are considered assets of education.<sup>35</sup> Their skills and capabilities must be updated continuously to align them with current trends and meet the requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Shortcomings of this pillar are teachers' skills and capabilities to provide the required support to fellow teachers, learners and parents. In addition, teachers are constrained due to their workload which takes most of their time. Consequently, coupled with inadequate skills and time constraints, teachers are unable to devote any time to activities of school-based support.

In addition to time constraints, teachers appear indifferent towards professional development. Teacher training was found to contribute towards teacher retention and had a positive influence on teaching approaches.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, teachers were found to be reluctant to attend training programmes.

---

<sup>32</sup> Debela Tezera, "Factors for the Successful Implementation of Policies," *Merit Research Journal of Education and Review* 7, no. 8 (2019): 92–95.

<sup>33</sup> Alex Tawse and Pooya Tabesh, "Strategy Implementation: A Review and an Introductory Framework," *European Management Journal* 39, no. 1 (2021): 22–33.

<sup>34</sup> Tezera, "Factors for the Successful Implementation of Policies."

<sup>35</sup> Jagannath K Dange and K Jagannath, "Role of Teacher Training Program in Enhancing Quality Education," *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society* 5, no. 6 (2020): 137.

<sup>36</sup> Hafiz Nauman Ahmed, Ali Rizwan Pasha, and Munawar Malik, "The Role of Teacher Training Programs in Optimizing Teacher Motivation and Professional Development Skills," *Bulletin of Education and Research* 43, no. 2 (2021): 17–37.

Their attitudes towards courses and other in-service programmes obstructed their development. However, incentives such as certificates at the end of training were found to motivate and encourage attendance to training courses. This demonstrates that teachers have a role to play in their development. They need to have a desire to acquire skills that will enhance their capabilities. Other incentives such as bonuses after acquiring a qualification or any other form of acknowledgement after training should be introduced to motivate teachers.

Studies have shown that teachers are knowledgeable about the role of school-based support in teaching and learning.<sup>37</sup> However, understanding alone is insufficient to improve access and educational outcomes. Teachers need to be supported and capacitated to equip them with capabilities to manage daily educational challenges. Part of this support would be an introduction of an incentive scheme that persuades personal and professional development.

This teacher development pillar encompasses teacher development programmes that capacitate them to deliver curriculum, promote inclusion and access, provide support and champion educational success. Robust training programmes that equip teachers with skills to address contextual challenges in their schools should be introduced. This will improve the quality of education, contribute to the attainment of educational goals,<sup>38</sup> knowledge and assist in the success of implemented programmes.<sup>39</sup>

The education department conducts various teacher training programmes and one of those training is the implementation of the policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS). The training is conducted as a mechanism for early identification and intervention of additional learning needs.<sup>40</sup> This training programme is more suitable for this pillar because it deals with addressing teachers' inadequacies in implementing inclusive education. The Department of Basic Education trained a significant number of teachers and officials in the implementation of the policy. However, the training has not yet had the expected impact as a mechanism for early identification and intervention.

The effectiveness of teacher training in the implementation of the policy is refuted by the findings by Netshipale, a study that necessitated the development of this strategy. Schools did not have systems in place to implement the policy.<sup>41</sup> They found the steps that were supposed to be followed tedious, swayed them away from their core responsibilities of teaching and learning and there were no resources to complement the implementation process. Based on this finding, the teacher training for the support pillar of the school-based support strategy should be adapted to suit rural school contexts, appeal to teachers' intellect, and interest and focus on promoting inclusion.

In addition to in-service training, teachers should be encouraged to enrol on courses such as sign language proficiency to equip them with basic sign language skills. There are mainstream schools that accommodate learners with hearing impairments who cannot communicate with these learners, which signifies a misalignment of skills and the needs of deaf and mute learners. Mainstream schools that accommodate physically impaired learners are considered inclusive and as such, their teachers are required to implement inclusive education. Such teachers are not equipped to deal with learning impediments presented by their learners. Learners with hearing impairments are subjected to reading teachers' lips to learn, which in most cases affects school attendance and promotes learner drop-out. Developing teachers in this area will promote inclusivity, access to learning and educational achievements.

Some schools still do not have support teams or functional support teams in place, which suggests a lack of or ineffective support services. The teacher development pillar can also be instrumental in capacitating such schools in the establishment and sustenance of support teams. This

---

<sup>37</sup> A. M. Netshipale, "Improving School-Based Support towards Access and Success of Rural Learners" (University of South Africa (UNISA), 2023).

<sup>38</sup> Rowell Ubogu, "The Role of Teacher Education in Improving Quality Education for a Functional Society," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 10, no. 2 (2020): 85–93.

<sup>39</sup> Martha Motshaki Mamabolo, Khashane Stephen Malatji, and Lydia Kgomotso Mphahlele, "The Role of Supervisors in the Implementation of the Integrated Quality Management System in Schools," *South African Journal of Education* 42, no. 1 (2022).

<sup>40</sup> Department of Basic Education, *The Draft Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)* (Pretoria, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Netshipale, "Improving School-Based Support towards Access and Success of Rural Learners."

can be achieved through engagement with fellow teachers from neighbouring schools and mentoring programmes. Engagement among teachers will create a platform for sharing ideas, best practices and possible solutions to challenges. Mentoring programmes, for example, are a form of professional development because they enhance teachers' classroom management skills.<sup>42</sup> Mentoring fosters the development of innovative pedagogical skills and knowledge, which is also key in improving learning achievements.

Another concept that can be adopted to strengthen the first pillar is twinning. The term 'twinning' involves pairing up poor-performing schools, teachers, or principals with the best performers. These individuals engage with each other regularly to share ideas, solutions, and best practices. They also assist one another by identifying possible resources that can aid teaching, learning and support. This term is popularly used in online communities and is referred to as eTwinning, which according to Çelebi and Yilmaz, provides teachers with learning platforms through online collaborative engagements.<sup>43</sup> Twinning fosters learning through social interaction and aids professional development. This concept will build capacity, identify possible avenues that can be adopted to attain education goals and equip teachers with knowledge of different practices that enrich education.

## **Pillar 2: Parental, community and stakeholder involvement**

Parents are not only responsible for providing their children with basic needs but are also obligated to enforce children's rights to education by ensuring school attendance. They are considered key sources of information on their children's needs.<sup>44</sup> Parents must be actively involved in the education of their children. Poor parental involvement has been associated with a lack of interest in education, a hostile school environment displayed through teachers' attitudes towards parents and community members.<sup>45</sup> However, there are instances when schools misconstrue underlying causes of poor or lack of parental involvement. There are socio-cultural and economic constraints that obstruct parental involvement.<sup>46</sup>

For example, some beliefs regard entering any premise without an invitation as an intrusion and some people of low or poor economic status tend to shy away from engaging with others. Lack of understanding of these factors also emanates from insufficient or lack of interaction, engagement, or communication between parents and schools, the kind of interaction that provides privy to certain principles and morals upheld by certain people. If schools, communities, and parents have regular engagement, they will strengthen their communication, which will aid in understanding each other's perspectives, beliefs, or challenges and promote participation and involvement. They can discuss and resolve certain issues that impede parental interest and involvement.

Netshipale, revealed low levels and lack of parental and community involvement in some of the rural schools that participated in the study.<sup>47</sup> Teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the level of parental involvement and raised concerns that parents were not creating a favourable learning environment at their homes. They claimed that parents only get involved when there are learner progression-related challenges or consequential and punishable difficulties involving their children. In some schools, parents did not even heed calls to go to school when there were critical issues involving their children. The above finding demonstrates teachers' frustrations at the perceived lack of involvement by educational partners. It is evident that this pillar, parental, community and stakeholder involvement, requires robust intervention. This pillar calls for meaningful participation and

---

<sup>42</sup> Tanya Smit and Pieter H du Toit, "Exploring the Pre-Service Teacher Mentoring Context: The Construction of Self-Regulated Professionalism Short Courses," *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2021): 1–13.

<sup>43</sup> Celalettin Çelebi and Fatih Yılmaz, "A Comparison of Metaphors Created by Teachers about ETwinning in Turkey and Abroad," *International Journal of Modern Education Studies* 5, no. 2 (2021): 394–417.

<sup>44</sup> Yanhui Liu, Mona F Sulaimani, and John E Henning, "The Significance of Parental Involvement in the Development in Infancy," *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 10, no. 1 (2020): 11.

<sup>45</sup> Liu, Sulaimani, and Henning, "The Significance of Parental Involvement in the Development in Infancy."

<sup>46</sup> Rockie Sibanda, "'I'm Not a Teacher': A Case of (Dys) Functional Parent-Teacher Partnerships in a South African Township," *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 3 (2021).

<sup>47</sup> Netshipale, "Improving School-Based Support towards Access and Success of Rural Learners."

involvement by all educational stakeholders including the community, sister departments and other non-governmental organisations.

There should be large-scale outreach programmes initiated by schools to attract and sustain parental, community and other stakeholder involvement. Schools should partner with other governmental departments and offer training programmes to parents and community members. For example, the creation of small vegetable gardens at their homes will be perceived as an act of good faith and have the potential to attract involvement in education. This activity will require schools to mobilize support from local businesses and other sister departments such as the Department of Agriculture which could sponsor communities with basic training, gardening tools, and other required resources. Other stakeholders will be requested to offer information sessions or other basic skills training programmes that would empower people.

Schools should be used as centres for those initiatives and other activities to demonstrate a willingness to work with their partners. This will create a welcoming environment, where stakeholders, particularly parents, will feel that they are part of and are welcomed by the school community. Equipping parents with basic skills will foster self-sufficiency and sustenance that alleviate some of the socio-economic challenges that they are facing. Successful implementation of this pillar requires large-scale advocacy campaigns to mobilize communities, parents and other stakeholders' support and involvement.

The success of pillar two (parental, community and stakeholder involvement) will require schools to establish and maintain healthy relationships with their partners in education. These relationships should be embedded within the principles of community of practice, that is congregating and engaging regularly, sharing resolutions to common challenges, and where members have roles and responsibilities aimed at enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes. Schools should have schedules of regular meetings with parents, community and other stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions that produce desired effects. The establishment of relationships also calls for teachers to be proactive in their practices. As an example, teachers should have schedules for conducting home visits. This act will allow teachers to gain a comprehensive understanding of barriers to participation and other impediments affecting learners' performance. Conducting home visits was found to reduce absenteeism and contribute to educational success.<sup>48</sup> Parents might view face-to-face interactions with teachers at their homes as a sign of genuine interest in their children's well-being, which might be reciprocated.

### **Pillar 3: Resource mobilisation**

The importance of resources in schools cannot be over-emphasized. Textbooks, for example, are critical in children's ability to read and write. Allocation of resources in schools has been a contentious subject in the South African education sector and has been widely explored or studied. However, to date, resource allocation is still a controversial and thorny subject, particularly in rural and disadvantaged schools. Resource challenges emanate from inadequate allocation by the state or mismanagement of provided resources by schools. It is evident that the South African government is unable to resource schools adequately. It would be beneficial to explore other avenues or routes of ensuring that schools are well-resourced.

To strengthen this pillar of support, resources will be garnered from different businesses, community members, parents and other stakeholders through sponsorships or donations. Businesses that sponsor or donate resources to schools should be allowed to place their advertising boards on school fences. This will incite collaborative initiatives that will benefit both parties involved. This drive has been proven effective by one of the schools that received donations of sanitary towels from a local business in a study conducted by Netshipale in 2023. The school approached local businesses for donations of sanitary towels without any incentive in return. This initiative minimized the usual

---

<sup>48</sup> Nathan E Soule and Heidi L Curtis, "High School Home Visits: Parent-Teacher Relationships and Student Success.," *School Community Journal* 31, no. 2 (2021): 131–53.

absenteeism that occurs when girl learners experience their monthly cycles. These girls were offered a lifeline, one that instilled confidence and guaranteed school attendance.

The success of pillar three will depend on schools' ability to engage with businesses to mobilize required resources. Direct approaches of inviting potential donors to visit schools during events will provide opportunities to demonstrate schools' needs. Stakeholder engagement through regular meetings initiated by schools is also an appropriate approach. This will create an awareness of challenges around educational resources and dispel certain misconceptions that potential donors might have. Schools will also be required to mobilize support from local businesses or communities to sponsor learner transport to ensure that teachers are able to conduct afternoon classes that are currently deterred by transport challenges.

The Department of Basic Education should also consider increasing its resource allocation in schools. Inadequacies in current funding models limit schools from fulfilling their mandates of providing equitable education to all. This is supported by the findings of Etor, Ekanem and Sule, who revealed that poor funding of schools and education contributes to limited access to education in Nigeria.<sup>49</sup> Comparably, the South African education sector is characterised by inadequate funding, which compromises the accessibility of resources in schools and ultimately challenges of providing equitable education.

Socio-economic conditions constrain rural parents from contributing financially to the education of their children. The Department of Basic Education can initiate collaborative engagement with internal and external non-governmental organisations to provide resources to rural schools. For example, the European Union partnered with the South African government to fund various educational projects. The South African government always makes provisions to fund government ministers' lifestyles through allowances such as motor vehicles, housing, security, and house helps among others.<sup>50</sup> Such funds can be invested in education through resource allocation.

#### **Pillar 4: Policy Alignment**

Another pillar central to the improvement of school-based support is policy alignment. This pillar involves addressing the mismatch between policies and contexts in which they are implemented. Studies have shown that educational policies are not always easily implementable due to various reasons, including lack of information, and lack of resources and knowledge.<sup>51</sup> This creates challenges that obstruct adherence to policy mandates. Misalignment of policies with contexts in which they are supposed to be implemented complicates delivery policies in rural schools. Policy developers must be knowledgeable about the environments under which policies will be implemented.

One of the aspects that require to be addressed to strengthen pillar four is the adaptation of National policies to school environments. Versioning of policies will allow schools to examine their environments and their characteristics that might aid or hinder effective implementation. Schools should be given leeway to develop their in-house policies guided by the main policy prescripts. This will provide opportunities to include other factors that might not be catered for in policies. School governing bodies are responsible for assisting schools in the development of policies.<sup>52</sup> Their involvement in policy development adds an element of collaboration, participation, and involvement, all of which are central to the school-based support strategy.

---

<sup>49</sup> Comfort R Etor, Ekpenyong E Ekanem, and Mary A Sule, "Access and Resource Allocation to Education in Nigeria.," *International Education Studies* 13, no. 3 (2020): 79–89.

<sup>50</sup> Government Gazette No. 33, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> S B Thajane and M G Masitsa, "An Investigation into Policy Implementation by Primary School Principals in the Free State Province," *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2021): S1–12; Emma Priscilla Barnett and Rouaan Maarman, "Principals' Views on the Implementation of the No-Fee Policy through the Lens of Capability Theory," *South African Journal of Education* 40, no. 3 (2020); Makobo Lydia Mogale and Mpho Calphonia Modipane, "The Implementation of the Progression Policy in Secondary Schools of the Limpopo Province in South Africa," *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>52</sup> Department of Basic Education, "Guidelines for Capacity Building of School Governing Body Members," 2018, [https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/SGBs/GUIDELINES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING of School Governing Body Members \(final 1\).pdf?ver=2018-06-08-094707-203](https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/SGBs/GUIDELINES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING of School Governing Body Members (final 1).pdf?ver=2018-06-08-094707-203).

The discrepancy between policies and contexts also relates to teachers' skills, knowledge, experiences, attitudes and capabilities. According to Vandeyar, teachers' knowledge or lack of, values and belief systems influence policy implementation.<sup>53</sup> He further stated that these factors should be considered or incorporated into policy development to ensure that policies are informed by the contexts they intend to serve. Teachers' ability to implement policies should be considered during policy development phases. If teachers are found to be inadequately prepared to manage the implementation processes and associated challenges, appropriate support should be provided. Training programmes to mitigate skills deficiencies should be context-specific, that is, address specific deficiencies experienced by a particular school.

Aligning policies with contexts also relates to workloads and time constraints. Time constraints were found to impede efforts to improve school-based support in rural schools. Teachers expressed that they are overloaded and do not have additional time to devote to school-based support initiatives or activities. Time constraints prevent teachers from adhering to policy prescripts, forcing them to choose what to implement and discard, which compromises educational quality, access and success.<sup>54</sup>

The Department of Basic Education is currently running the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative which employs unemployed youth as education assistants in schools.<sup>55</sup> These individuals were provided with basic training to assist and support teachers before, during and after classroom sessions. The programme targeted specific learning areas such as languages and mathematics. This initiative is instrumental in addressing teachers' time constraints. Teacher assistants should be employed permanently, or their contracts should be extended indefinitely to alleviate teachers' workloads, which will afford teachers time to devote to curriculum implementation and other support-related matters.

Another area under pillar four (policy alignment) that should be considered is revisiting the National Learner Transport Policy, which was developed to address the inaccessibility of school facilities and the safety of learners.<sup>56</sup> The Department of Transport, in partnership with the Department of Basic Education, provides learners in rural communities who live far from schools with scholar transport to fulfil their rights to education and ensure their safety. According to this policy, beneficiaries of scholar transport are learners from Grades R to 12 who travel long distances from their homes to reach schools. Currently, the policy does not meet the demands of all rural learners. It is ineffective in delivering its mandate. There are still rural learners who travel long distances to reach schools that are nearer to their homes. Ineffectiveness in the implementation of the policy complicates children's ability to access education, which infringes on their right to education. Inaccessibility of school facilities also promotes absenteeism and learner dropout.

This eligibility criterion should be revised to explicitly spell out the number of kilometres between schools and homes that should warrant scholar transport. Provinces and districts should be allowed to revise the policy to suit their schools' contexts and needs. Alternatively, the policy should be amended to cover all learners in rural communities. Current scholar transport times should also be revised to accommodate after-school classes and activities conducted as support mechanisms for learners with additional learning needs.

## **Pillar 5: Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted during or after the implementation process to assess the level of success, progress, and impact of the programme.<sup>57</sup> Monitoring the progress and success of

---

<sup>53</sup> Thirusellvan Vandeyar, "ICT Policy Appropriation: Teachers as Transformative ICT Agents," *Perspectives in Education* 39, no. 4 (2021): 43–56.

<sup>54</sup> Nani Teig, Ronny Scherer, and Trude Nilsen, "I Know I Can, but Do I Have the Time? The Role of Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Perceived Time Constraints in Implementing Cognitive-Activation Strategies in Science," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019): 1697.

<sup>55</sup> Department Of Basic Education, "Presential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) In the Basic Education Sector. Guideline For Placement of Assistants Appointed in Phase IV of PYEI in the Basic Education Sector," 2022.

<sup>56</sup> Government Gazette, 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Stella Silas Karimi, Angeline Sabina Mulwa, and Dorothy Ndunge Kyalo, "Stakeholder Capacity Building in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Literacy and Numeracy Educational Programme in Public Primary Schools in Nairobi County,

the school-based support strategy will take place continuously as the implementation process progresses and evaluation of the success of the implementation of the strategy will be conducted afterwards.<sup>58</sup> Monitoring will assist in determining progress and challenges encountered and whether the implementation of the strategy is on course. This will provide opportunities for refinement of activities that proved ineffective and assist in addressing encountered challenges.

Schools will be required to provide progress updates for each pillar of support quarterly. Reports will be populated in the relevant reporting template that would have been developed together with the implementation plan. Reports will highlight areas of success, challenges, and mitigations to address identified challenges. Districts-based support teams should provide support whenever necessary to ensure that identified impediments are addressed effectively. An in-depth study should be conducted to assess the level of improvement in school-based support and the feasibility of the strategy. The undertaking could be carried out by the research unit at provincial or district levels or by independent researchers.

Determinants of success of the school-based support strategy will be evident in a school's ability to establish and maintain functional support teams, increased parental and stakeholder engagement, participation and involvement, availability and accessibility of resources, teachers who are not strained and have matching skills and capabilities to execute their responsibilities efficiently and context-specific policies. Ultimately, the success of the strategy will be demonstrated by the accessibility of education and opportunities to learn, the extent to which schools are implementing inclusive education and improved learner performance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The above discussions outlined how the pillars of support could be enhanced to contribute towards productive support systems that cater to diverse learning needs. Pillars of support require intense impact to exert required outcomes such as the creation of teaching, learning and support environments that promote inclusivity, and foster engagement, collaboration and involvement, which in turn improves learning outcomes. It is recommended that the Department of Basic Education consider implementing the School-Based Support Strategy, which addresses deficiencies identified within each pillar of support to strengthen, refine, and revive the effectiveness of support teams and intervention measures they employ.

## CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to present the school-based support strategy developed to address deficiencies identified in various pillars of support in schools. The shortcomings presented by these pillars of support are attributed to various challenges such as insufficient stakeholder engagement, participation, parental involvement, inadequate resources, policy-related challenges and ill-equipped teachers. Addressing these challenges could strengthen these pillars of support, hold support structures and services together and aid in successful curriculum delivery and educational achievement. Strengthening existing support systems, creating nurturing teaching and learning environments that embrace stakeholder involvement, capacity building and alignment of policies to rural contexts will promote educational access and improve success in education-

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ajani, Oluwatoyin Ayodele. "Challenges Mitigating against Effective Adoption and Usage of E-Learning in Curriculum Delivery in South African Universities." *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*, no. 2 (38) (2023).

---

Kenya.," *Higher Education Studies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 186–200; Itai Kabonga, "Principles and Practice of Monitoring and Evaluation: A Paraphernalia for Effective Development," *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies* 48, no. 2 (2018).

<sup>58</sup> Varkey George, Lynette Jacobs, and Merle Hodges, "Virtual Monitoring and Evaluation of Capacity Development in Higher Education Projects: Lessons for the Future.," *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society*, 2022.

- Al-Shammari, Zaid N. "Applying Humanism-Based Instructional Strategies in Inclusive Education Schools." *Education Quarterly Reviews* 4, no. 2 (2021): 629–31.
- Alshwiah, Abeer Aidh. "Barriers to Online Learning: Adjusting to the 'New Normal' in the Time of COVID-19." *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education* 22, no. 4 (2021): 212–28.
- Bachman, Hadley F, Eric M Anderman, Brett Zyromski, and Barbara Boone. "The Role of Parents during the Middle School Years: Strategies for Teachers to Support Middle School Family Engagement." *School Community Journal* 31, no. 1 (2021): 109–26.
- Barnett, Emma Priscilla, and Rouaan Maarman. "Principals' Views on the Implementation of the No-Fee Policy through the Lens of Capability Theory." *South African Journal of Education* 40, no. 3 (2020).
- Beasley, Keshona T, and Carianne Bernadowski. "An Examination of Reading Specialist Candidates' Knowledge and Self-Efficacy in Behavior and Classroom Management: An Instrumental Case Study." *Education Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2019): 76.
- Beer, Stephan De. "Constructing an Urban Theology of Liberation in South Africa Today: A Transdisciplinary Praxis-Approach in the Interface between (Urban) Faith, Politics and Planning." *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 51, no. 1 (2023): 85–114.
- Brinton, Donna M, Kimberly Chilmonik, Andrea Echelberger, and Sarina Monh. "Establishing and Sustaining a Community of Practice." *CATESOL Journal* 32, no. 1 (2021): 133–43.
- Cekiso, Madoda, Tsielo Rabeleman, Jay Jadezweni, Itani P Mandende, and Marius Dieperink. "Factors Affecting Grade 6 Learners' Reading Performance in a Rural School in Maluti, South Africa." *Reading & Writing-Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa* 13, no. 1 (2022): 327.
- Çelebi, Celalettin, and Fatih Yılmaz. "A Comparison of Metaphors Created by Teachers about ETwinning in Turkey and Abroad." *International Journal of Modern Education Studies* 5, no. 2 (2021): 394–417.
- Chehaib, Hiba, Liliana Rodríguez-Campos, and Anjanette Todd. "Evaluation of a School-Based Program Designed to Improve the Mental Health in Children: A Collaborative Approach." *School Community Journal* 33, no. 1 (2023): 229–50.
- Dange, Jagannath K, and K Jagannath. "Role of Teacher Training Program in Enhancing Quality Education." *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society* 5, no. 6 (2020): 137.
- Davids, Nuraan. "Governance in South African Schools: Democratic Advancement or Hindrance?" *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 50, no. 3 (2022): 436–51.
- Department of Basic Education. *PIRLS 2021: South African Preliminary Highlights Report*. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, 2023.
- . *The Draft Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)*. Pretoria, 2014.
- . "Guidelines for Capacity Building of School Governing Body Members," 2018. [https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/SGBs/GUIDELINES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING of School Governing Body Members \(final 1\).pdf?ver=2018-06-08-094707-203](https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/SGBs/GUIDELINES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING of School Governing Body Members (final 1).pdf?ver=2018-06-08-094707-203).
- Department Of Basic Education. "Presential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) In the Basic Education Sector. Guideline For Placement of Assistants Appointed in Phase IV of PYEI in the Basic Education Sector," 2022.
- Easterly, R G Tre, Natalie Ferand, Brian Myers, and Sebastian Galindo. "Examining How Principals Support School-Based Agricultural Education Programs." *Journal of Agricultural Education* 64, no. 2 (2023): 162–75.
- Etor, Comfort R, Ekpenyong E Ekanem, and Mary A Sule. "Access and Resource Allocation to Education in Nigeria." *International Education Studies* 13, no. 3 (2020): 79–89.

- George, Varkey, Lynette Jacobs, and Merle Hodges. "Virtual Monitoring and Evaluation of Capacity Development in Higher Education Projects: Lessons for the Future." *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society*, 2022.
- Hamidi, Farideh, Shokoofeh Soleymani, Sara Dazy, and Maryam Meshkat. "Teaching Mathematics Based on Integrating Reading Strategies and Working Memory in Elementary School." *Athens Journal of Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 9–22.
- Kabonga, Itai. "Principles and Practice of Monitoring and Evaluation: A Paraphernalia for Effective Development." *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies* 48, no. 2 (2018): 21-pages.
- Karimi, Stella Silas, Angeline Sabina Mulwa, and Dorothy Ndunge Kyalo. "Stakeholder Capacity Building in Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Literacy and Numeracy Educational Programme in Public Primary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya." *Higher Education Studies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 186–200.
- Khan, Haji Karim. "Conducting Narrative Studies in Pakistan: Reflections from the Field." *Journal of Education and Educational Development* 7, no. 1 (2020): 177–83.
- Leyton Román, Marta, Susana Lobato Muñoz, and Ruth Jiménez Castuera. "The Importance of Assigning Responsibility during Evaluation in Order to Increase Student Satisfaction from Physical Education Classes: A Structural Equation Model." *PloS One* 14, no. 9 (2019): e0209398.
- Liu, Yanhui, Mona F Sulaimani, and John E Henning. "The Significance of Parental Involvement in the Development in Infancy." *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 10, no. 1 (2020): 11.
- Mamabolo, Martha Motshaki, Khashane Stephen Malatji, and Lydia Kgomotso Mphahlele. "The Role of Supervisors in the Implementation of the Integrated Quality Management System in Schools." *South African Journal of Education* 42, no. 1 (2022).
- Manzini, Theresa Lydia Badiktsie. "The Support of Juvenile Offender Learners in Correctional Centre Schools: A Spiritual Wellness Perspective." *European Journal of Education (EJED)* 3, no. 1 (2020): 90–105.
- Marôco, João, Hugo Assunção, Heidi Harju-Luukkainen, Su-Wei Lin, Pou-Seong Sit, Kwok-cheung Cheung, Benvindo Maloa, Ivana Stepanović Ilic, Thomas J. Smith, and Juliana A. D. B. Campos. "Predictors of Academic Efficacy and Dropout Intention in University Students: Can Engagement Suppress Burnout?" *PLOS ONE* 15, no. 10 (October 29, 2020): e0239816. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239816>.
- Mason, Susan M, Allison Lind, Nancy E Sherwood, and Erin P Sugrue. "Building School-Based Capacity to Support Parenting: Challenges and Lessons Learned." *School Mental Health* 15, no. 3 (2023): 886–99.
- Mogale, Makobo Lydia, and Mpho Calphonia Modipane. "The Implementation of the Progression Policy in Secondary Schools of the Limpopo Province in South Africa." *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 1 (2021).
- Nauman Ahmed, Hafiz, Ali Rizwan Pasha, and Munawar Malik. "The Role of Teacher Training Programs in Optimizing Teacher Motivation and Professional Development Skills." *Bulletin of Education and Research* 43, no. 2 (2021): 17–37.
- Netshipale, A. M. "Improving School-Based Support towards Access and Success of Rural Learners." University of South Africa (UNISA), 2023.
- Ningi, Aisha Ibrahim. "Data Presentation in Qualitative Research: The Outcomes of the Pattern of Ideas with the Raw Data." *International Journal of Qualitative Research* 1, no. 3 (2022): 196–200.
- Owen, Kaydee L, Stacey H Hunter, Richard C Watkins, Joshua S Payne, Tom Bailey, Cameron Gray, Richard P Hastings, and J Carl Hughes. "Implementation Support Improves Outcomes of a Fluency-Based Mathematics Strategy: A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial." *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 14, no. 3 (2021): 523–42.

- Plessis, Pierre Du, and Raj Mestry. "Teachers for Rural Schools—a Challenge for South Africa." *South African Journal of Education* 39 (2019).
- Republic of South Africa. *Report of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, No. 140 of 18*. Pretoria, 2023.
- Shava, George N, Siphumuzile Hleza, Faith Tlou, Smarntha Shonhiwa, and Ethel Mathonsi. "Qualitative Content Analysis, Utility, Usability and Processes in Educational Research." *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 5, no. 7 (2021): 553–58.
- Shikalepo, Elock Emvula. "Attributes Underlying Learner Performance in Rural Schools: The Perspectives of Rural School Teachers in Namibia." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Education and Research* 5, no. 1 (2020): 6–11.
- Sibanda, Rockie. "'I'm Not a Teacher': A Case of (Dys) Functional Parent-Teacher Partnerships in a South African Township." *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 3 (2021).
- Smit, Tanya, and Pieter H du Toit. "Exploring the Pre-Service Teacher Mentoring Context: The Construction of Self-Regulated Professionalism Short Courses." *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2021): 1–13.
- Soule, Nathan E, and Heidi L Curtis. "High School Home Visits: Parent-Teacher Relationships and Student Success." *School Community Journal* 31, no. 2 (2021): 131–53.
- Subedi, Khim Raj. "Determining the Sample in Qualitative Research." *Online Submission* 4 (2021): 1–13.
- Tawse, Alex, and Pooya Tabesh. "Strategy Implementation: A Review and an Introductory Framework." *European Management Journal* 39, no. 1 (2021): 22–33.
- Teig, Nani, Ronny Scherer, and Trude Nilsen. "I Know I Can, but Do I Have the Time? The Role of Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Perceived Time Constraints in Implementing Cognitive-Activation Strategies in Science." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019): 1697.
- Tezera, Debela. "Factors for the Successful Implementation of Policies." *Merit Research Journal of Education and Review* 7, no. 8 (2019): 92–95.
- Thajane, S B, and M G Masitsa. "An Investigation into Policy Implementation by Primary School Principals in the Free State Province." *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2021): S1–12.
- Ubogu, Rowell. "The Role of Teacher Education in Improving Quality Education for a Functional Society." *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 10, no. 2 (2020): 85–93.
- Ugwu, C I, J N Ekere, and Chioma Onoh. "Research Paradigms and Methodological Choices in the Research Process." *Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology* 14, no. 2 (2021): 116–24.
- Uleanya, Chinaza, Vincent Smith, and Bongani Thulani Gamede. "Leadership Issues: Investigation of the Etiology of Curriculum Delivery in Rural Institutions of Learning." *SAGE Open* 13, no. 3 (2023): 21582440231193564.
- Vandeyar, Thirusellvan. "ICT Policy Appropriation: Teachers as Transformative ICT Agents." *Perspectives in Education* 39, no. 4 (2021): 43–56.
- Zhao, Kai. "Rural-Urban Gap in Academic Performance at a Highly Selective Chinese University: Variations and Determinants." *Higher Education Research & Development* 41, no. 1 (2022): 177–92.

## ABOUT AUTHORS

Dr. Adziliwi Martha Netshipale is a Deputy Director (Branch Coordinator) in the Curriculum Policy, Support and Monitoring Branch at the Department of Basic Education. She was previously employed in a private sector as a Security Officer and Legal Secretary. She joined the Department of Basic Education in 2005 as a Senior Secretary and progressed to her current position. Her responsibilities as a Deputy Director (Branch Coordinator) include Management and administration of the office of the Deputy Director-General and the Branch, Management and coordination of Branch Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Reporting, as well as Risk Management, Administrative, strategic and advisory

support to the Ministry, office of the Director-General, Deputy Director-General and the Branch on all Branch activities, including Human Resource Management, Financial Management and Stakeholder Relations.

Professor Lloyd Daniel Nkoli Tlale is a professor in the Department of Psychology of Education at the University of South Africa. He joined UNISA after being a teacher and a teachers' college lecturer for several years. He was previously an education specialist for the Department of Basic Education, supporting and training teachers in inclusive education. Currently, his responsibilities include teacher training (tuition), postgraduate supervision, research and community engagement projects. He is also the head of department – Psychology of Education at the University of South Africa. His research interests include gifted child education, orphans and vulnerable children, children in conflict with the law, social justice and qualitative research.

Dr. Thembi Phala (PhD) is a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of South Africa. Before joining academia, she was a teacher and an inclusive education specialist. She is a teacher educator and supervisor for postgraduate students in early childhood department, psychology of education department and inclusive department. Her research interests include supporting diverse learners experiencing reading problems in African languages and promoting inclusive education in schools. She has written and presented research papers and participated in multidisciplinary research in her field.