

Contemporary issues in South African education



Edited by
**Vusi Mncube, Mzuyanda Percival Mavuso,
Winston Hendricks & Charl Wolhuter**

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The publisher (AOSIS) endorses the South African 'National Scholarly Book Publishers Forum Best Practice for Peer-Review of Scholarly Books'. The book proposal form was evaluated by our Social Sciences, Humanities, Education and Business Management editorial board. The manuscript underwent an evaluation to compare the level of originality with other published works and was subjected to rigorous two-step single-blind peer-review before publication by two technical expert reviewers, who did not include the volume editors and were independent of the volume editors, with the identities of the reviewers not revealed to the editor(s) or author(s). The reviewers were independent of the publisher, editor(s) and author(s). The publisher shared feedback on the similarity reports and the reviewers' assessments with the editor(s) and author(s) to improve the manuscript. Where the reviewers recommended revisions and improvements, the editor(s) and author(s) responded adequately to such recommendations. The reviewers commented positively on the scholarly merits of the manuscript and recommended that the book be published.

Research justification

It can be confidently stated that South African education is in a state of crisis and facing severe challenges. This assessment is supported by the performance of South African learners in international assessments, such as the Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021, where South Africa ranked last among the 43 participating countries and experienced the largest decline of all the nations involved.

There is a need to explore, unpack, interrogate and assess the challenges facing education in South Africa. This book examines a selection of critical issues in South African education, with each chapter dedicated to a specific topic and authored by a scholar who is an authority in that area. Each chapter offers a unique perspective on various challenges faced by the South African education system, contributing to our understanding of its weaknesses and potential solutions. The research methodology employed in the different chapters is qualitative in nature, providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being analysed.

All chapters are original research and have been checked for plagiarism using the iThenticate similarity detection program. All the similarities and overlaps were adequately addressed and, therefore, there is no plagiarism in this book. The following chapters are based on Master of Arts (MA) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) theses: 'Parents as partners in education: A reality or pipedream?' by Oluwatoyin Jumoke Adelabu and Vusi Mncube; and 'Analysing the advancements achieved in inclusive education since its implementation in South Africa', by Bongumusa Gubevu, Vusi Mncube and Nyawo Nokuphumla. Two chapters are partially based on published material: 'South African education: Promise and challenges' by Vusi Mncube and Charl Wolhuter, and 'The significance of the South African case in the global education expansion and reform project on the global scene' by Charl Wolhuter. The necessary acknowledgements are provided in these chapters.

The book represents a scholarly discourse and is authored by scholars for other scholars, particularly those who are experts in South African education, making it a contribution to new knowledge.

Charl Wolhuter, Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa.

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Abbreviations and acronyms, boxes, figures and tables appearing in the text and notes

List of abbreviations and acronyms

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
5IR	Fifth Industrial Revolution
AI	artificial intelligence
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ATP	annual teaching plans
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BIPOC	black, indigenous and people of colour
CBST	circuit-based support team
CHE	Council for Higher Education
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CWDs	children with disabilities
CWSNs	children with special needs
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	district-based support team
ECCE	early childhood care and education
ECD	early childhood development
ECDoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
EELC	Equal Education Law Centre
EFA	education for all
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
EWP	Education White Paper
FET	further education and training
GIS	geographic information system
GIS-T	geographic information system tutors

HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICT	information and communication technology
ICTs	information and communication technologies
IE	inclusive education
IEDC	integrated education for disabled children
JIT	just-in-time
LoLT	language of learning and teaching
LTSM	learner teacher support material
LWDs	learners with disabilities
LWLDs	learners with learning difficulties
MIP	Matric Intervention Programme
MLEs	multilingual learning materials
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
NSC	National Senior Certificate
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
OMEP	Organization for Early Childhood Education and Care
OMT	Oppenheimer Memorial Trust
PI	parental involvement
PIRLS	Progress in Reading Literacy Study
PLCs	professional learning communities
PWDs	persons with disabilities
QIE	quality inclusive education
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAIC	School Assessment and Integrity Committee
SAMR	substitution, augmentation, modification and redefinition
SBSTs	school-based support teams
SDGs	sustainable development goals
SETT	Student-Environment-Tasks-Tools
SFCE	School of Further and Continuing Education
SGB	school governing board
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (Policy)
SITE	School for Initial Teacher Education
SMT	school management team
SMTs	school management teams
SWDs	students with disabilities

TAU	Teaching Advancement at Universities
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TPACK	technology, pedagogy and content knowledge
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
WIDE	World Inequality Database on Education

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Chapter 1

South African education: Promise and challenges¹

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■ Abstract

This chapter begins with the global rise of education expansion over the past 80 years, as education has come to be regarded as a panacea for societal issues and a means to achieve various societal visions. South Africa is no exception to this trend. The second part of the chapter outlines how education – encompassing both basic and higher education – has simultaneously become a pivotal component and a key instrument in the socio-political reconstruction project initiated in 1994. The chapter then evaluates the current state of education 30 years after the reconstruction process began, identifying key challenges. This sets the framework for

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subsequent chapters, which explore issues such as blended teaching and learning approaches in higher education, improper staff-student relationships at universities, the use of technology to enhance educational efforts, the education-employment nexus, early childhood education, leadership, rural education, democracy and education and learner discipline.

■ Introduction

Education in South Africa plays a crucial role in the overall societal reconstruction project that began in 1994 and is regarded as a key instrument for achieving the desired societal changes. Historian and political commentator RW Johnson argues convincingly in his book *Fighting for the Dream* (Johnson 2019) that South Africa's unique societal context elevates the country, making it significant for the global societal project. This assertion can also be applied to the South African education project, as scholars publishing in top journals within the field of comparative and international education and beyond frequently reference South Africa as an exemplar, model, datum line or reference point (e.g. see Magnusson & Walton 2023; Reimers 2022; Sappleton & Adams 2022).

Education is a complex undertaking, and after nearly 30 years, an assessment of this education system is certainly timely. The aim of this book is to evaluate the South African education system, 30 years after a major reconstruction project began, by focusing on a selection of critical issues in South African education. While primarily intended as a scholarly research book, the target readership includes not only scholars of education in South Africa and beyond, but also postgraduate and undergraduate students who wish to learn more about South African education.

This first chapter provides a comprehensive overview and assessment of South African education. It will identify a selection of critical issues, each of which will be explored in detail in the subsequent chapters, written by scholars specialising in those themes. The chapter begins by explaining how South African education has become both a pivotal component of and an instrument for the societal reconstruction project that commenced in 1994. Finally, it will assess the current state of education nearly three decades later.

■ Research methodology

The research method used in this chapter, as well as the position taken in this manuscript, is rooted in the field of comparative and international education. The method of comparative education posits that every aspect of education, including institutions and stakeholders, is part of a comprehensive education system that should be studied and understood

within that context. Furthermore, this education system exists in a symbiotic relationship with the societal context in which it operates. This societal context gives rise to the education system, fulfilling specific functions and needs. It is within this context that the antecedents of many issues facing the education system can be found, as well as the products or outcomes it delivers. Therefore, an education system can only be understood and should be studied within its societal context. Finally, especially in the current age of globalisation, any national education system – particularly the South African education system – contributes to a global education expansion and reform project, serving as a showcase for other nations to learn from.

■ **Foregrounding education as an instrument to bring about desired societal change: A forceful global trend since the mid-20th century²**

For most of human history, schools did not exist, and there seemed to be no need for them. *Homo sapiens* has been around for about 200,000 years, yet even after the Cognitive Revolution – when language evolved – approximately 70,000 years ago, and the Upper Neolithic Revolution, around 30,000 years ago, which saw the proliferation of art, schools were not created. Even the Agricultural Revolution, which first occurred in the Fertile Crescent of North Africa and the Middle East, began without any schools in society.

According to the best of evidence, schools emerged around 3500 BC, soon after the invention of writing (Bowen 1982, p. 8). These first schools were in Mesopotamia (Bowen 1982). While the two best theories as to why schools were called into existence for the first time, that of Yehudi Cohen (1970) and of David Gray (2013), who connect the emergence of schools with respectively the need for political integration in centralised states and to the economic exigencies of the agricultural revolution, still for a long time – centuries if not millennia, schools existed at the fringes of society, and had little effect on the lives of most people or on social or economic development. The name ‘school’ has been derived from the ancient Greek word meaning ‘spending of leisure time’, that is, schools were for the children of the idle rich, to fill all their leisure hours, with no further significance. Institutions of education stood rather disconnected from momentous of the 18th century, which laid the basis of the modern political

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order, such as the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688, the *American Declaration of Independence* in 1783, the subsequent development of a Bill of Human Rights and a Constitution in the United States of America and the French Revolution of 1789. Neither some of those who drew up the American Constitution (such as Thomas Paine) nor those who were the intellectual track-layers towards the French Revolution (Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire) were attached to any university or underwent any higher education. The impact of schooling and education on economic development is evident in the fact that during the first hundred years of the Industrial Revolution, which began around 1750 in England, the incidence of adult literacy actually declined from about one-third to about one-quarter of the adult population (Cipolla 1969, p. 1).

The role of education in culture, in the broadest sense, can be inferred from enrolment figures and adult literacy rates, even halfway through the 20th century. In Europe and North America, where schooling was most advanced at the time, only 5% of the population had attended any form of primary education by 1800 (De Bolton 2022, p. 245). In 1900, only 6% of 17-year-olds in the state of Iowa in the United States of America completed secondary school (Goldin & Katz 2000, p. 784). The aggregate global adult literacy rate in 1900 came to a mere 20% (Mortimer 2014, p. 268), by 1930, it had risen to 40% and by 1955, for the first time in human history, it got as far as 50% (Trewartha 1969, p. 133). In Africa at the cusp before independence, in 1960, gross primary, secondary and higher education enrolment ratios stood at 44%, 5% and 1%, respectively, while the adult literacy rate stood at a paltry 9% (Wolhuter & Van Niekerk 2010, p. 4).

■ **Foregrounding education in pursuit of a societal goal or vision³**

A complete turnaround came during the decades after the end of the Second World War (WWII). Education was seized upon as the means to achieve a wide range of goals regarded by society as being desired. These included for example the stimulation of economic growth, the stamping out of unemployment, the setting in place of opportunities for both individual and social mobility, the entrenchment of a culture of respect for human rights, the strengthening of democracy, the modernisation of nations deemed to be undeveloped or underdeveloped, the forging of national unity, reducing the number of traffic accidents and stamping out of drug abuse (see Monkman 2022).

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A few of these, which have attracted most attention in the scholarly as well as in the public discourse on education, will now be discussed in more detail. Despite Gray's (2013) thesis as to the origin of schools, explained earlier, for millennia, schools were seen as the leisure ground of the 'idle rich' (as the origin of the name school, explained above, suggests). If ever a relationship between education and economic activity was sought, either schools were founded to keep children and youth away from productive work, that is, education affected economic output negatively, or education was seen as a consumer item rather than as a production factor in the economy. Then, human capital theory made its appearance. In his 1959 presidential address to the American Association of Economists, Theodor Schultz (professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) put forth his theory of human capital. Schultz explains his theory as follows:

Although it is obvious that people acquire useful skills and knowledge, it is less obvious that these skills and knowledge are a form of capital, that this capital is in substantial of a product of deliberate investment, that it has grown in Western societies at a much faster rate than conventional (non-human) investment, and that this growth may well be the most distinctive feature of the economic system. It has been widely observed that increases in economic output have been large compared with the increases in land, man-hours and physical reproducible capital. Investment in human capital is probably the major explanation for this difference. (Schultz 1961, p. 1)

Schultz's theory of human capital ushered in a new epoch of thinking about Economics (*cf.* Sobel 1982; Tonini 2021). In 1979, Schultz was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for his theory of human capital.

It was not long after Schultz began to proclaim his theory that an important book providing empirical substantiation for his claims was published. Frederick Harbison and Carl Meyer's *Education, Manpower and Economic Growth: Strategies of Human Resource Development* (1964) calculated a Pearson correlation coefficient between level of education development (such as investment in education and enrolment ratios) on the one hand, and economic strength on the other, of 75 countries, and came to the impressive correlation coefficient of 0.88.

Education has also come to be seen as the way to effect social mobility, both individual and group mobility (see, e.g. Bereményi, Durst & Nyiro 2024). An example of a recently published report advocating education as a means to promote social mobility is the 2018 Report of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 'A Broken Elevator: How to promote social mobility' (OECD 2018). Over the past 70 years, numerous studies have calculated individual rates of return to education. While these studies have faced their share of criticism, they have consistently yielded

positive results at the aggregate level (see Lozano 2011). A research report by Euromonitor International (2007, pp. 102–107) on income distribution in various countries details the ratio of average disposable income for individuals who completed tertiary education to the average net disposable income per capita. The report indicates that the world average income premium is 164%, which rises to 251% in Latin America. Additionally, the three highest income premiums are found in Egypt at 251.5%, Jordan at 260% and Saudi Arabia at 278%.

A third example of how education has been prioritised over the past 70 years to achieve societal objectives concerns the population explosion. Concern about the ominous results of unchecked population growth dates at least from the essay of Thomas Malthus (1826), two centuries ago, in which he predicted the future course or history of humanity as a race between population growth and food production, the former likely to win, but resulting in mass starvation. With the global population explosion really taking off during the decades after WWII, Stanford professor Paul Ehrlich's alarmistic book *The Population Bomb* (Ehrlich 1968) secured the population explosion a place in the public discourse. Education is often seen as a hopeful solution to the unchecked population growth occurring in many parts of the world (Coetzee 1988; Colclough 1996; Idenburg 1975, p. 89). Development economist Greg Mills (2021, p. 90), in his recently published book, states it as follows: 'The only conceivable and sustainable way to bring down these rates of population growth is [...] education'.

One final societal driver of the post-WWII global education expansion project that needs to be highlighted is the role of education as a vital component of foreign aid. As the superpowers of the Western and Eastern Blocs competed for the favour of nations in the Global South, education became an increasingly significant factor in the overall foreign aid package. Philip Coombs (1964) describes it as a 'fourth dimension' in American foreign relations, alongside the politico-diplomatic, military and economic aspects.

The collective beliefs and positive expectations about education that developed within society led to an impressive global expansion of educational initiatives. Chapter 1, entitled 'South African education: Promise and challenges' and Chapter 7, entitled 'The significance of the South African case in the global education expansion and reform project on the global scene' will discuss the objectives of this project.

In response to the ecological threat and other issues facing humanity, the global community has drafted 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) as its unified target for 2030. On 25 September 2015, the General Assembly of

the United Nations (UN) adopted Resolution 70/1: 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (UN 2015). Goal 4 of these 17 SDGs deals with education. Goal 4 is stated as follows: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UN 2015).

From these 17 SDGs, the latest global education initiative, the *Incheon Declaration*, 2015, was born. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank and a few other organisations, convened the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 19 to 22 May 2015. Over 1,600 representatives from 160 countries, including over 120 ministers, heads and members of delegations, heads of agencies and officials of multilateral and bilateral organisations, and representatives of civil society, the teaching profession, youth and the private sector, drew up and adopted the *Incheon Declaration* for Education 2030. This Declaration unpacks Goal 4 of the 17 SDGs. The *Incheon Declaration* spelt out a new vision for education in the world for the ensuing 15 years (cf. UNESCO 2015). This plan expands or unpacks the vision of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, which is Goal 4 of the SDGs.

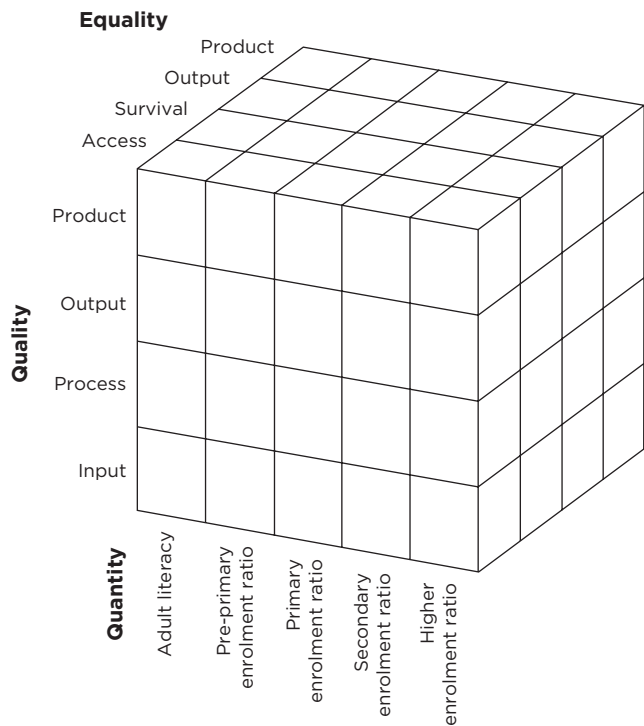
■ South Africa's education as a centrepiece and instrument towards societal reconstruction

South Africa has been no exception to this global trend of an impressive education expansion project, driven by a boundless belief in the societal ameliorative power of education. When the socio-political reconstruction project commenced in 1994, education found itself simultaneously the scene of change and seen to be an instrument to accomplish a host of other changes. A new education system, aligned to the new societal context, had to be shaped. The principles or intrinsic goals of this envisioned education system can be encapsulated in the following concepts: Democratisation, desegregation, decentralisation, equal educational opportunities and multicultural education (Wolhuter 1999). Furthermore, the entire education system was intended to empower the population and contribute to various societal goals of an economic, social, cultural and political nature. These goals constitute the *extrinsic* objectives of education. The economic goals included eradicating poverty and unemployment while catalysing the country's economic productivity and development. Social goals involved creating a society free from racial, gender and other forms of discrimination, promoting social mobility, and dismantling artificial

hierarchies and barriers to progress. Cultural goals focused on empowering individuals to participate in cultural expression. Finally, political goals aimed to empower citizens to engage in the democratic process and contribute to nation-building by establishing a common system of values rooted in democracy, equality, freedom, peace, justice, respect for human rights, tolerance and stability.

■ Assessment of the South African education project

The aforementioned represents a significant undertaking in education, and nearly 30 years after its inception, an assessment is timely. Evaluating any education system or project should occur along three dimensions: quantitative, qualitative and equality (see Wolhuter 2014). These can schematically be portrayed as a cube, as in Figure 1.1.



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FIGURE 1.1: Model for the evaluation of a national education project.

■ Quantitative dimension

To commence with the quantitative dimension, since 1994, enrolments have increased at all levels of education, particularly at the level of tertiary education. The growth in enrolments is presented in Table 1.1.

The statistics in Table 1.1 testify to an impressive education expansion project over the past 30 years. However, these statistics should be viewed together with enrolment ratios.

Progress in terms of gross enrolment ratios in South Africa, since 1990, is presented in Table 1.2.

The gross enrolment ratio figures in Table 1.2 also testify to growth at the secondary and higher education level. At the level of higher education, South Africa has definitely made the transition, in Martin Trow's (2007) oft-cited classification, from an elite to a mass higher education system. Martin Trow distinguished between three levels of development of national higher education systems, based upon gross enrolment ratios. These are elite higher education systems, where the gross higher education enrolment ratio is less than 15%; mass higher education systems, where the gross higher education enrolment ratio is between 15% and 50%, and universal higher education systems, where the gross higher education enrolment ratio is above 50%.

However impressive the enrolment surge and gross enrolment ratio figures may be, they conceal significant problems, even within the quantitative dimensions of the national education project. Internal attrition,

TABLE 1.1: Progress in enrolments in South Africa.

Year	Level of education		
	Primary education	Secondary education	Higher education
1990	6,951,777	2,742,005	439,007
2000	7,444,802	4,144,916	539,271*
2010	7,024,368	4,758,111	1,005,721**
2020	7,716,038	5,100,811	1,184,215

Source: Authors' own adaption and tabulation from data from UNESCO (2023).

Note: *1999 figure; **2012 figure.

TABLE 1.2: Progress in gross enrolment ratios (%) in South Africa.

Year	Level of education		
	Primary education	Secondary education	Higher education
1990	104.81*	68.66	15
2000	101.49*	81.66	13
2010	104.73*	96.18	18
2020	97.11	102.10*	24.24

Source: Authors' own adaption and tabulation from data from UNESCO (2023).

Note: *Percentages over 100 because of average learners.

characterised by high drop-out rates and early school leaving, poses a substantial challenge for the South African education system. Out of every 100 learners entering Grade 1, 60 write matric, 37 pass the matriculation examination, 14 pass with university admission granted, 12 enter university, 6 eventually finish a degree and only 4 finish in 6 years with a degree (Council for Higher Education [CHE] 2017). International comparative studies comparing the South African education system with others have repeatedly highlighted the unusually high attrition rates as an Achilles' heel of South African education (see Wolhuter 1998, 2014).

It should further be stated that impressive as the growth in gross higher education enrolment ratios over the past 30 years has been, in other upper-middle-income countries, the ratios are typically more than twice as high. For example, in Argentina, Brazil, Malaysia and Mexico, the gross higher education enrolment ratios stand at 95%, 55%, 43% and 43%, respectively (Index Mundi 2023b). Much impressive still are the figures for the leading nations in the world regarding gross higher education enrolment ratios: First and second are Greece with 149% and Australia with 116% (Index Mundi 2023b).

At the level of doctoral education, the discrepancy between South Africa and even other upper-middle-income countries is stark. In South Africa the doctoral degree production per million population per year is only 46 (in this respect South Africa lies 64th place in the world) (Mouton, By contrast, the corresponding figure for Slovenia (highest in the world) is 485, for Switzerland 465 and for the United Kingdom 409 (respectively the second and third highest in the world) (Mouton et al. 2019). Even in other upper-middle-income countries, the figures are generally significantly higher than in South Africa: Mexico: 48, Brazil: 90 and Malaysia: 132 (Mouton et al. 2019). The rate of growth in the delivery of doctoral graduates in South Africa is also slower than in most other countries (Academy of Science of South Africa 2010; Mouton et al. 2019, pp. 28–29).

The adult literacy rate in South Africa in 2021 (latest available figure at time of writing) was 95.33%, dropping from an all-time high of 98.96% in 2015 (Global Data 2022). While adult literacy rates are high, South Africa still has 2.17 million illiterate adults, one in 58 countries worldwide with more than a million illiterate adults (Wolhuter & Barbieri 2017). South Africa is the country in the world with the 41st highest number of illiterate adults (Wolhuter & Barbieri 2017). Furthermore, according to the World Literacy Foundation, the financial costs and social effects of 4.7% of South African adults having low-level literacy skills amount to ZAR1,919 billion per year (Cree, Kay & Steward 2022).

On the quantitative dimension, two further issues should be raised, namely that of pre-primary education and that of the impact of the

coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. On pre-primary education, hard statistics (globally in general and in South Africa in particular) are not as abundant as with respect to other levels of education (which may be related to the hitherto rather unregulated nature of pre-primary education). But whatever data are available point to immense progress during the first years and two decades after 1994. A comparison between South African education and education systems abroad showed that in 1998, pre-primary education was still a very weak spot in South African education (Wolhuter 1998). A follow-up study, comparing South African education with education systems abroad in 2014, shows that the pre-primary school education was no longer a major weak spot in South African education, although universal attendance of pre-primary education was still a very long way off (Wolhuter 2014). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly hindered progress in quantitative measures, particularly at the pre-primary level, and likely at other levels as well. The exact extent and long-term impact of this setback remain unclear. However, at the pre-primary level, the following figures provide insight. In 2019 – before the pandemic – 10.9% of 5-year-olds in South Africa were not enrolled in a pre-primary education institution (Kemp 2022). In 2020 – the year with the strictest of lockdown regulations – this figure shot up to 37.7% (Kemp 2022). In 2021, the situation is marginally better, but still 19.4%, well under the pre-COVID-19 level (Kemp 2022).

■ Quality dimension

Education quality is a complex concept that defies a simple, one-line definition or measurement. It cannot be easily defined in a single sentence. A more effective approach is to analyse the components that contribute to education quality. Building on the model by Bergmann (1996), Wolhuter (2020) identifies the following components: input quality, process quality, output quality and product quality.

Input quality means the quality of the financial input and physical infrastructure of a school or of an education system. Measuring input quality is relatively easy. There are several indicators of input quality, and data are readily available. Such indicators include per student public expenditure on education on each level of education (primary, secondary and higher education), and also public expenditure on education as a percentage of per capita gross domestic product (Wolhuter 1997, 2011).

Several studies (see Wolhuter 1998, 2014) have found that South African public expenditure on education, whether measured as per student expenditure or as percentage of the total government budget, is relatively high (at least when compared to other upper middle-income countries), and has been so for at least three decades (see Wolhuter 1998, 2014). In 2020 (latest available statistic at time of writing), South African public

expenditure on education amounts to 6.84% of the country's gross domestic product (Index Mundi 2023b). This is the 19th highest in the world (Index Mundi 2023b). It should, however, also be mentioned that in recent years, per learner public spending on education has been on a declining slope. In 2009, the government spent about ZAR20,000 per learner; by 2021, this figure had dropped to ZAR16,500 (Sikhakhane 2023, p. 7).

On the pupil-teacher ratio at the primary school level, the figure for South Africa stands at 20 (World Bank 2023a). This is better than the typical figure for lower-income and lower-middle-income countries, such as 55 for Ethiopia, and compares well to the world aggregate of 23, although worse than high-income countries, for example, Germany: 12 (World Bank 2023a). However, a cause for concern is that in recent years, the number of teachers in South Africa has not increased, while the number of learners has (Sikhakhane 2023, p. 7). It is generally known that many schools in South Africa are in need of the most basic of facilities. Approximately a quarter of South African schools do not have running water, and about one-third have no library (Küsel 2019, p. 1).

Process quality means the quality of teaching and learning occurring within an education project (be it a school or education system). Process quality is more complex than input quality, as it involves, on its part, a host of factors some difficult to measure (such as teacher input, learner input, curriculum, teaching methods, learning methods and leadership) (see Wolhuter 2014). The following sub-components of process quality can be enumerated: the administrative substructure of the education system or institution, the curriculum, the school environment, the teacher factor, the parental and family home factor, and learner input. Not only is process quality complex, but it is generally difficult to measure, and data are not always readily available. However, beginning with the first, the administrative substructure, it can surely safely be extrapolated that the general serious decline in levels of service delivery, of supremacy of law, and the incidence of instances of corruption and malfeasance and civil service incompetence in South Africa (see Leon 2021; Malan 2019; Pauw 2017, 2022) must have their adverse effect on the administrative substructure of the education system(s) of the country too. In fact, literature documenting concern-raising instances of these within the education system, right up to the level of universities, exists (e.g. see Jansen 2023). Studies comparing the South African curriculum and/or critically assessing school curricula are not high on the research agenda of Curriculum Studies in South Africa (see Carl 2012). The school environment, on its part, contains a host of constituent factors. These include the organisational culture of the school, the code of conduct and how that code is being implemented, how physically and otherwise safe the school is, physical facilities and leadership. In a school environment, there is a body of evidence indicating that South African

schools are, for example, places where incidences of violence are rife (e.g. see Harber & Mncube 2017). The teacher factor is not above criticism. Hard statistics are difficult to come by, but Prof. Harold Herman, former Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, writes that research has shown that on average 35% of teachers in South African schools are absent on any given day (Herman 2020, p. 303). Based on the best official statistics, the Minister of Basic Education stated in 2019 that, each day some 41,000 teachers in South African schools do not report for work (Küsel 2019, p. 1). The Minister of Basic Education has pointed poor discipline (and especially high rates of absenteeism) of school principals as a pivotal reason of the poor state of schools and education in South Africa (Küsel 2019, p. 1).

On the parental-family-home background factor, many learners grow up in a situation where they do not receive the desired support and guidance and security of a stable parental-family-home environment. Only 31.7% of black children, 51.3% of mixed-race children, 86.1% of Indian/Asian children and 80.2% of white children stay with their biological fathers (Matangira 2021). By 2020, there were 2.9 million children in South Africa under the age of 18, of whom one or both parents had died. Parental illiteracy (or low levels of education) and poverty, too, are contributing factors in rendering home backgrounds of learners less than optimal for supporting the education effort of schools.

Learner input is a factor for which there are no extensive, reliable and hard statistics available. One large-scale international dataset that did include a measure of this factor, and in which South Africa did participate, was the 2011 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS study). This test measured how many hours Grade 9 learners [use for] homework in the subject of science per week. The results of South Africa compared [poorly] with the averages of the 29 participating countries are [published] in the study of Martin et al. (2012) based on TIMSS data. [The achievement levels] of South African learners are lower than those of the international average. For example, for those learners who spend more than 3 hours per week on science homework, the South African average test mark in the TIMSS science test was 308, [while] the international average [of] learners who spend more than 3 hours per week on science homework) [was] 448 (Martin et al. 2012; Wolhuter 2014, p. 18).

Output quality refers to the outcome of the teaching-learning process, that is, the achievement levels of learners at the end of an education programme. When considering output quality in South African education, the high attrition rate should first be noted. Estimates are that only about half of learners enrolled for Grade 1 reach Grade 12 (Cloete 2023). Further cause for concern is the high number of failures in the matriculation (Grade 12, or secondary school termination) examination. Firstly, it should be noted that criticism has

been levelled against this examination, both in terms of standards (e.g. see Mouton, Louw & Strydom 2012) and in terms of integrity (e.g. see Knysna-Plett Herald 2023). The pass rate in the most recent rounds of examination, in 2023, was 82.9% (Skole Ondersteuningsentrum 2024). While that may seem impressive, given that 691,160 candidates sat for the examination, it means that 118,177 failed. Moreover, just 40.0% passed with grades high enough to qualify for university entrance (Skole Ondersteuningsentrum 2024).

Moreover, all indications suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a decline in achievement levels. According to the 2022 edition of the 2030 Reading Panel Report, only 22% of Grade 4 learners are able to read with comprehension (Spaull 2022). In contrast, in Iran – which has a similar level of economic development as South Africa – the corresponding figure is 65% (Spaull 2022).

What is also alarming is that in international test series in which South Africa has participated, such as the TIMSS and Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), South Africa has constantly ended last or very close to last of all participating nations. Oxford professor Lant Pritchett, described as the world's leading scholar on education reforms, made the following statement based on his analysis of World Bank data: 'South Africa is the worst (education) performer relative to per capita income in the world' (Bernstein 2023, p. 14). The low achievement levels of South African learners against international benchmarks, in early-phase reading in particular, are so severe that the Human Rights Commission has deemed it necessary to investigate it and to bring out a report on it (South African Human Rights Commission 2021). In fact, a good summary of how South African learners compare to learners in other countries, when it comes to reading proficiency in the early grades of schooling, can be found in the South African Human Rights Commission's report, *The Right to Read and Write Report* (South African Human Rights Commission 2021). The report noted that the most recent PIRLS survey shows that 78% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa did not reach the low international benchmark. This stands in sharp contrast to the other participating countries. Of the 50 countries that took part in PIRLS 2016, the median percentage of students not reaching the low international benchmark was only 4% (South African Human Rights Commission 2021).

Product quality entails the quality of the product produced by the education system. It therefore entails the difference that education has brought about in the lives of individuals (learners) for the rest of their lives, and in society. The impact of education on the life chances of individuals is typically measured in terms of individual rates of return or unemployment rates among people of different educational qualification levels. In Table 1.3,

TABLE 1.3: Unemployment rates (in percentage) per level of education in South Africa.

Highest level of education	Unemployment rate (%)
Graduate	12.5
Tertiary education lower than a degree	23.2
Matric	36.5
Lower than matric	40.2
Aggregate unemployment rate	37.9

Source: Authors' own adaption and tabulation of data from *BusinessTech* (2021).

the unemployment rate in South Africa for people with different categories of education is presented.

However, among young graduates, the unemployment rates are 32.6% for the 15–24 year age group and 22.4% for the 25–34 year age group (Vlotman & Clayford 2023). It seems as if young graduates have a high unemployment rate, but with time, it equals the level of diplomas and certificates.

■ Equality dimension

Equality or equity in education, or equal education opportunities, are concepts for which no easy and unanimous definition exists. Defining the concept of education and educational opportunities is fraught with difficulties. Below, a diverse range of existing definitions of these terms is enumerated. To pin it down to one line or one sentence is intractable (cf. Wolhuter 1993, pp. 76–77). Lazenby (2016, p. 65) states that 'There is widespread disagreement about what equality of opportunity in education requires'.

Parelius and Parelius (1978, p. 283) define equal education opportunities as that condition where each individual, irrespective of ascribed characteristics such as family background, religion, race or gender, has the same chance to attain specific socio-economic positions by means of education.

Tyler (1977, p. 119) distinguishes between six possible definitions of the concept of equal educational opportunities:

- Providing equivalent quantities of educational resources to each individual (i.e. equal per capita spending on education for all learners)
- Bringing every individual to the same education level
- Ensuring that each individual receives the amount of education which will enable him/her to realise his/her potential fully
- Education supply to each individual to the point where the incremental effect of learning is equal to that of all other learners
- Supplying access to education to all, whether they use or can benefit from such opportunities or not

- Ensuring equal representation proportional to their size in the total population of various ethnic, socio-economic and other strata, at every level of education.

A highly cited model of equality in education is that of Canadian comparativist, the late Joseph Farrell (first published 1982; republished and reworked 2013). Farrell (1982) distinguishes between four components of equality:

- *Equality of access*: The statistical probability that learners from every social category could enter the school system.
- *Equality of survival*: The statistical probability that learners from every social category would attain a particular level in the school system (e.g. the last year of secondary school).
- *Equality of output*: The statistical probability that learners from every social category would attain the same outcomes (e.g. successfully complete secondary education).
- *Equality of product*: The statistical probability that learners from every social category with the same educational credentials would be able to secure the same work, salaries and life opportunities.

But no matter how equality is defined or measured, worldwide inequality in education can be detected. The three main dimensions of educational inequality in the world, also called the ‘trinity of inequality’ are gender, socio-economic status, and race and/or ethnicity. Further to these three dimensions, inequality also exists along a number of other dimensions, such as geography, rural-urban differences, age, ableism and lately, the attention of much scholarly activity, sexual identity or gender orientation (see Bracho 2021; Piketty 2022). In geography, there is a widespread (if not well-nigh universal) phenomenon of the core-periphery gradient regarding education (and other) opportunities. This gradient exists intranationally (e.g. see Plank 1987) as well as globally (as dependency theorists are quick to point out, see Eckstein & Noah 1985). Worldwide, urban-rural disparities in education are evident, with urban residents typically receiving preferential treatment. In the field of comparative and international education, China serves as a classic example of a large national education system characterised by significant urban-rural inequalities (see Hao, Hu & Lo 2014).

The historic and still dominant gender inequality in the world is that males are the favoured party (see Steinmann, Strietholt & Rosén 2023). However, in many instances, this pattern is reversed. In South Africa, among some population groups, adult female literacy rates have historically been higher than those of males (see Wolhuter 1998). In many countries in the world at present, female enrolment ratios at the primary school level have

come to be higher than male enrolment ratios (see Mapani 2011). Abdourahmane (2021, p. 15) ascertains the following remuneration differences between men and women of equal education levels in Saudi Arabia: those who have completed primary school education, the average remuneration of men is 5,901 Saudi Riyal per month, in the case of women it is 4,063 (i.e. a wage gap of 1,838 Saudi Riyal per month); those with completed secondary education as highest level of education, the average remuneration of men is 8,874 Saudi Riyal per month against the average remuneration of women coming to 5,202 (i.e. a gap of 3,631 Saudi Riyal per month); holders of Bachelor degrees, the average salary of men is 13,148 Saudi Riyal per month against women 10,257 (i.e. a wage gap of 2,891 Saudi Riyal per month); holders of masters degrees, the average remuneration of men is 18,720 Saudi Riyal per month against women 11,805 (i.e. a wage gap of 6,716 Saudi Riyal per month) and those with doctorates, the average salary of men is 26,701 against women 23,372 (a gap of 3,321 Saudi Riyal per month).

Inequalities in South African education are prevalent across various dimensions. Notably, the gender wage gap has increased in recent times (see Pleace, Clance & Nicholls 2024). In both scholarly and public discourse, racial inequality has garnered the most attention. Hard data demonstrating persistent, albeit diminishing, stark racial inequalities are easily accessible. For example, the percentages of the 18–29 age group enrolled in higher education for each population group are as follows: 24.6% for white individuals, 16.2% for Indian individuals, 6.2% for mixed-race individuals and 5.3% for black individuals (Sikhakhane 2023, p. 7).

While racial inequalities have garnered the most attention, disparities along other dimensions – such as gender and socio-economic status – are also significant. The 2021 PIRLS study, mentioned earlier, reported that South Africa has the largest gender gap among all 57 participating countries, with boys lagging 18 months behind their female counterparts (Anon 2023, p. 1).

■ Scope of volume and prospectus

In 1994, South Africa embarked on an ambitious project for societal and educational reconstruction. This initiative, filled equally with challenges and promise, is far from complete 30 years later. South African education faces significant challenges in all three dimensions: quantity (access and participation), quality and equality (see also Cohen 2024). Given the pivotal role assigned to education for the socio-political reconstruction of South Africa, it is difficult to disagree with assessments such as the recent report by the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (2023) that education is the Achilles'

heel of South Africa. This makes the guidance from scholars in the many fields of scholarly studies of education very valuable. The scope of this volume is a selection of studies, zooming in on some of the most compelling challenges besetting South African education.

Parents as partners have always been recognised as an important factor in the educational success of children (see Mocho et al. 2024). In Chapter 2, entitled 'Parents as partners in education: A reality or pipedream?', Oluwatoyin Jumoke Adelabu and Vusi Mncube unpack this aspect of education in South Africa.

To reach the ideal of equality in education, and to realise the global community's ideal of 'inclusive education (IE)', as formulated in the *Incheon Declaration*, IE is a prerequisite (see Damiani, Elder & Oswago 2024). In South Africa, many policy documents regarding IE have seen the light of day over the past 30 years. Yet these policy statements mean nothing unless teachers are also on board and do understand fully the concept of IE. In Chapter 3, entitled 'Analysing the advancements achieved in inclusive education since its implementation in South Africa', Bongumusa Gubevu, Vusi Mncube and Nokuphumula Nyawo examine the understanding of IE among a sample of primary school teachers in South Africa.

Modern-day developments in technological progress have opened new possibilities for education (see Fullard 2024; Harari 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic has further catalysed the development of technology-enhanced education. In meeting the challenges facing education in South Africa, it is imperative to explore the possibilities offered by technology. In Chapter 4, entitled 'Information and communication technologies in the curriculum: Focusing on Geography education', Bongumusa Gubevu and Vusi Mncube employed an interpretivist paradigm to study the integration of information and communication technologies in Geography education at selected schools in the Nkande Circuit, uMzinyathi district, KwaZulu-Natal.

While the objectives of education reach far beyond the preparation for jobs, employability remains one of the major rationales and goals of education (Bereményi et al. 2024; Tight 2023). As was explained above, this is one area in which South Africa falls seriously short. In Chapter 5, entitled 'Transforming pedagogical practices in early childhood care and education', Nonzukiso Tyilo and Thobeka Matshoba document processes and strategies embarked upon by some universities to enhance the employability prospects of graduates.

One of the perennial problems in education in contemporary times, in South Africa as well as globally, is that of learner discipline (Obadire, Tenidade & Dzivhonele 2021). Traditionally, teachers have heavily relied on corporal punishment. But with corporal punishment outlawed, and going against the current moral code of human rights, teachers now find

themselves at a loss as to how to maintain sound learner discipline. Positive discipline has been suggested as the best possible way to maintain learner discipline.

The flipside of learner discipline is the need for a corps of disciplined educators. The post-1990 global trend of democratisation has also swept over South Africa, and the democratic political dispensation and general societal culture have also permeated the education system, where democratisation has been one of the foundation principles of the reconstructed, post-1994 education dispensation. But for effective schools and for quality education to take place, this democratic culture cannot be unbounded, and has to be balanced by the need for a disciplined corps of teachers, something South African schools often fall short of (see Jansen 2024). In Chapter 6, entitled 'Exploring the tension between authority and democratic schooling in South Africa', Babawande Emmanuel Olawale and Winston Hendricks examine the current situation of democratic schooling in South Africa, the nature and basis of authority in democratic schooling, factors contributing to authority problems in democratic schools and the actualisation of democracy in the South African school context.

■ Contribution to knowledge

This chapter provides a comprehensive assessment of South African education 30 years after the start of the educational and socio-political reconstruction project. It also establishes a framework for understanding the subsequent chapters in the book. The chapter concludes that, across three key areas – quantitative access to and participation in education, the quality of education, and equality in education – South African education is lacking and urgently requires attention and corrective action. In light of this assessment, the chapter positions the remaining chapters within this framework.

■ Conclusion

Thus, the volume comprises eight chapters following this introductory chapter, each focusing on a specific challenge facing South African education that hinders the education system from fulfilling its promise. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the various challenges confronting South African education and illustrates how the research reported in the subsequent chapters fits into this broader context. Chapter 7 outlines the place and significance of the South African education project within the global landscape of educational efforts. Finally, the concluding chapter highlights the value of the chapters in this book for the global education expansion and reform initiative.

Chapter 2

Parents as partners in education: A reality or pipedream?¹

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■ Abstract

Parents as partners in education refers to the collaborative effort between parents and their children's schools to support and enhance their development and education. When parents intentionally partner in the education of their children, both at home and at school, it conveys a

1. This chapter represents a substantial reworking (more than 50%) of Adelabu, OJ 2020, MA thesis, entitled, 'Parents' involvement in education of their children: Case study of two selected secondary schools in the Amathole West district', with Professor Vusi Mncube as supervisor, Department of Early Childhood Education and Development, Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa, <<http://hdl.handle.net/10353/19969>>.

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message to the children that their parents have an interest in their learning, allowing them to have a positive perception of the school. Parents being partners in their children's education has been an important means of increasing academic achievement. These include parents communicating with their children's educators, parents attending parents' teachers' meetings, volunteering, contacting the school regarding their children's performance and behaviour, and participating in their children's school governance. Involving parents in their children's education not only improves children's academic performance but also boosts school attendance and enhances social and emotional growth.

■ Introduction

Parents as partners in their children's education are widely recognised as a critical factor in fostering academic success (Fihla 2018; Ribeiro et al. 2021). Policymakers, educators and researchers agree that when parents actively participate in their children's academic journey, children tend to perform better, exhibit positive attitudes and gain long-term educational benefits (Antony-Newman 2020; Đurišić & Bunijevac 2017; O'Toole, Kiely & McGillicuddy 2019). Beyond academic performance, parental involvement (PI) contributes to children's social, emotional and behavioural development, as well as strengthening the partnership between schools and families (Panaoura 2021; Selolo 2018). Parents as partners in education involve a variety of activities that parents participate in for the benefit of their children's success at school (Panaoura 2021). Such participation includes contacting the educators about their children's performance and children's welfare, engaging children in discussions about school, helping them with homework, visiting the school to familiarise themselves with the educators to be informed about their children's performance in school and getting actively involved in the school's policies (Appiah-Kubi & Amoako 2022). Parents' partnership is the active involvement of parents in all aspects of their children's lives socially, emotionally and academically (Yulianti et al. 2022). It is the parents' shared responsibility in the education of their children (Epstein 2018). The partnership of parents also includes their belief and their mental and emotional resources as part of their children's education (Malik 2023).

Similarly, parents as partners is a concept that involves awareness and accomplishment in education, which brings about an understanding of the interaction between learner success in education and parenting skills, and commitment to constant communication with educators about learners' progress (Haastrup 2024; Oranga, Matere & Nyakundi 2023). Parents as partners is multifaceted: It focuses on two aspects, which include parents' activities at home and in school. Schools alone cannot

take responsibility for the children's education; hence, both the school and parents must be involved directly and indirectly in children's education in different ways (Eden, Chisom & Adeniyi 2024). Parents and educators are the two main educators in a child's life because they influence the child's learning throughout school and beyond school (Mann, Kennedy-Wood & Gilmore 2024). Children perform better, have a better attitude towards school and have more expectations from school when their parents are partners in their education (Tang & Tran 2023). There are also positive academic outcomes, which include higher grades and positive attitudes towards school, which are beneficial both for the school and the children involved. Parents can understand how and what their children learn at school and be able to realise their academic abilities through their involvement in their education (Panaoura 2021). When the relationship between the parents and their children's educators is good and constantly strengthening, it brings about children's academic growth (Myende & Nhlumayo 2022). Educators play a very important role in encouraging parents to get involved in their children's education both at home and at school (Yulianti et al. 2022).

■ Home-based partner

The home-based partnership includes activities that contribute to a child's academic and personal development at home such as helping with homework, setting standards or expectations, parents monitoring school tasks or progress, discussing school with their children and socialising children in school behaviour (Kim & Yu 2024; Ribeiro et al. 2021). Home-based parent participation includes activities that parents engage in to promote their children's educational achievement and development, such as motivating their children to learn, concentrate, persist and exhibit positive classroom behaviours (Kim & Yu 2024).

Parents also socialise their children in behaviours conducive to school success, such as discipline, focus and time management (Panaoura 2021). Additionally, parental belief in the importance of education and providing a supportive and stable home environment has been shown to positively impact children's academic attitudes and outcomes (Malik 2023).

■ School-based partner

School-based parental partnership involves all forms of parental participation and direct engagement within the school environment. This includes attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering for school activities, participating in governance structures and assisting with extracurricular programmes (Panaoura 2021). This type of participation

fosters strong collaboration between parents and educators, ensuring shared goals and enhanced communication. Parents who actively participate in school functions contribute not only to their child's success but also to a more inclusive and supportive school community (Coskun & Katitas 2021; Eden et al. 2024). According to Haisraeli and Fogiel-Bijaoui (2023), educators and parents described parental participation in different ways. Parents tended to emphasise a community-oriented perspective, focusing on keeping children safe, transporting them to school and providing food. In contrast, educators defined parental participation as parents making themselves available at their children's school (Coskun & Katitas 2021; Eden et al. 2024).

■ Methodology

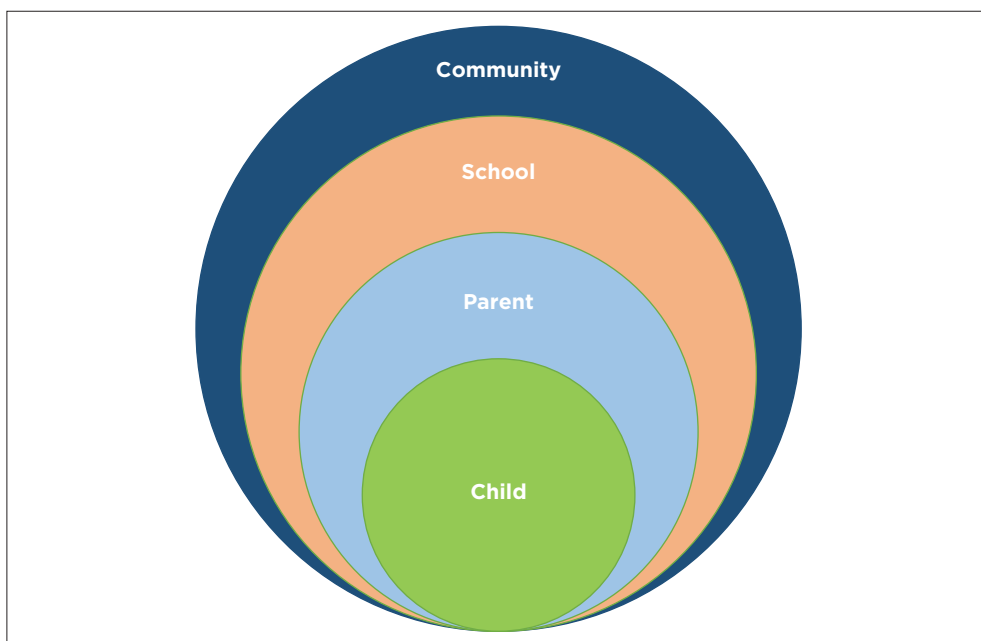
This literature review examines parents as partners in education: a reality or a pipe dream? Emphasis is placed on some theoretical frameworks that guide parent involvement in schools, the challenges that parents experience in their attempts to engage with schools, and how schools can encourage and sustain PI in schools. It emphasises the need for schools and parents to collaborate as partners to maximise children's academic, social and emotional development. This study focused on all types of written communications that shed light on the phenomenon under investigation; documents such as lesson plans, parents' and teachers' meeting records, school governing board (SGB) meetings records and other documents relating to parents' involvement in their children's education in school were reviewed.

■ Theoretical perspective of parents as partners

■ The theory of overlapping spheres

This is a theory of partnership developed by Joyce Epstein, Director of the Centre for School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Epstein's theory redefines the relationship between schools, families and communities as overlapping spheres of influence that have a common concern about the success of children. The theory was initially introduced in 1996. Epstein's theoretical framework aimed to explain PI through three key perspectives, which are (see Figure 2.1):

- *Separate the responsibilities of families and schools:* Epstein (1987) argues that parents' and educators' distinct goals are 'to yield positive results when teachers maintain their professional standards and decisions for children in their classrooms while parents maintain their



Source: Author's own work adapted from Epstein's (2011) model of overlapping family and school spheres.

FIGURE 2.1: Three perspectives on parental involvement in school education.

standards and decisions for their children at home' (Adelabu & Mncube 2023b).

- *Shared responsibilities of families and schools:* Epstein (1987) posits that the school and parents should work together in a coordinated, cooperative and complementary manner. Both the school and parents share a responsibility towards children's socialisation and education, which can be achieved when they work together (Adelabu & Mncube 2023a).
- The third perspective is *sequential responsibilities between* the school and families, explaining how teachers and parents are involved in children's education and their contribution to children's development. The sequential perspective emphasises that the children's early years are critical for future success, and by the time the child is in preschool or Grade 1 (5 and 6 years), the attitudes and personality to learning are well-established (Epstein 1987). This study, therefore, sought to establish how parents are involved in children's education from the three perspectives.

The theory of shared responsibilities of families and schools is the core perspective of this study. The theory emphasises families and schools working together in unity, where parents and educators share their duties,

children's educational needs are met, and performances are improved (Eden et al. 2024). Epstein (1995) posits that parents and educators take the responsibility of developing children holistically, and parents support educators in providing an excellent education while parents perform their duties towards their children's education at home, in line with the educator's activities at school. Parents and educators combined efforts to bring about increased interaction between the schools and the parents, creating a family-like school and school-like family (Oranga, Matere & Nyakundi 2023). Epstein (1995) posits that a family-like school identifies children's individuality and makes them feel special and involved. Family-like schools welcome all families and not just those that are easy to reach, and school-like families recognise that children are learners and support the importance of school, homework, activities that build education and feelings of success (Smith 2024).

The disadvantage of this theory is the separate responsibilities of families and schools: the theory advocates that some responsibilities are best performed individually by parents and educators. According to Sianturi, Lee and Cumming (2023), some schools advocate the separate responsibility of parents and educators which is characterised by inharmoniousness, competition and fights that may exist between parents and educators. This pulls schools and families apart, resulting in the division of labour. School and family organisations are directed by educators and parents, and separate duties emphasise the need for training for educators and parents on their various roles and responsibilities. Supported by the work of Epstein (2019), the researcher sees that it is better if parents and educators work together to bring out the best in the children, not only in academics but also socially, physically, mentally and in all areas of children's lives. The PI theory argues that the relationship between school and home can enhance children's progress and reinforcement in the two learning environments (Bencivengo 2024). Epstein (2019) argues that when educators collaborate with parents, they gain a deeper understanding of their learners, enabling them to develop effective solutions to classroom challenges, fostering a shared understanding among educators, parents and learners. Educators and parents have shared mission and goals, which can be seen as external and internal functions. The external function identifies the contexts in which children can learn and develop, such as the school, community and parents can separately or jointly support their children's learning (Epstein & Sheldon 2002). On the other hand, the internal function shows how the relationship between parents, school and community is complex and essential, which influences individuals at home, school and the community (Epstein 2018).

■ Parental involvement theory by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler

Subsequently, according to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), parents' involvement can influence children's education through behavioural reinforcement and positive attitudes, by taking an active interest in the children's education, thereby creating continuity in what is taught in school and home, encouraging a desired outcome. Parents can participate in the children's education by helping with homework and improving learning with activities at home (Wildmon, Anthony & Kamau 2024). Parents' psychological motivations are shaped by their perceived life context; factors such as time, energy, skills and knowledge vary depending on their life stage, and they are not fixed; they can change and evolve (see Box 2.1) (Liu 2024; Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey 2010).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory focuses not only on behavioural practices but also on psychosocial constructs that facilitate the relationship between parents as partners in education and learners' educational outcomes (Borders 2024; Holmgren 2024). The theory addresses three questions which are (1) why parents get involved in the education of their children, (2) what type of involvement is chosen by parents and (3) how parents' involvement has positive influences on their children's educational outcomes (Fan & Chen 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997). The theory

BOX 2.1: Parents' psychological motivations and involvement in their children's education.

Level 1		
Personal motivators (parents' role construction for involvement and self-efficacy for helping learners)	Parents' perception of invitations (invitations from the school, educators and the child)	Life context variables (parents' knowledge, skills, time, energy and family culture)
Level 2		
Parental involvement forms (values, goals, expectations, aspirations, and involvement at home and at school)		
Level 3		
Educational mechanisms used by parents during involvement activities such as encouragement, modelling, reinforcement and instruction		
Level 4		
Facilitating variables learners' perception of learning mechanisms engaged by parents: Encouragement, modelling, reinforcement and instruction		
Level 5		
Student academic outcomes (knowledge, skills and personal sense of efficacy for doing well)		

explains the different stages of parental participation from factors that motivate parents to become involved in their children's education to their involvement outcomes. Stage 1 is the parent's decision to be involved, knowledge about their duties in being involved in their children's education, their skills to produce outcomes and the direct request from the children, educators and school to parents to be involved in the education of their children, for example, involvement in school events, projects and festivities, and helping with homework. Stage 2 is the parental participation form, which is the activities parents engage in when they partner intentionally in the education of their children, both at home and at school. Stage 3 focuses on ways in which parents, schools and educators promote parents' involvement/partnership through strategies such as reinforcement, modelling, encouragement and instructions. At Stage 4, the focus is on learners: It assumes that the learners are developing academic self-efficacy, motivation to learn and self-regulatory skills, parents' socio-economic status, educational background, schools creating a welcoming environment and language barriers that decrease or increase PI. Finally, Stage 5 is the children's learning outcome, which is measured by the knowledge and skills they need to achieve (Holmgren 2024).

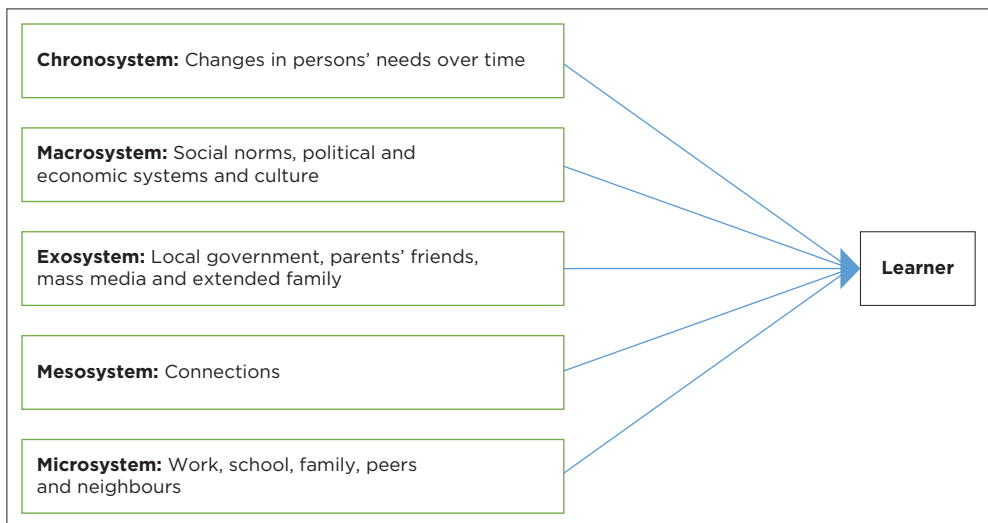
Through school behaviour and attitudes, parents can have their way in the school by having an interest in the education of their children, encouraging their children through reinforcement and helping with learning at home (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997; Zhao et al. 2024). Parents' involvement theory was used in this study because it encourages parents' participation in the education of their children, how parents can partner, and the relationship between parents and educators. This theory has helped in developing effective research questions or interview questions on parents' motivations for participation, which is crucial for academic development and about perceptions of parental engagement. Also, Oranga, Matere and Nyakundi (2023) explain home-school communication as a form of PI in their children's education. This communication is crucial for fostering a strong relationship between home and school, as the extent of parents' communication with the school influences their relationship with it (Spear et al. 2023). Different activities should be encouraged to promote effective communication between parents and schools about the school programmes, children's academic performance and any other school activities for the year (Abdullah et al. 2023). Schools must allow parents to give their opinions, views and concerns regarding any issues about their children, culture and their children's education (Saracho 2023).

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler theory of PI helps schools identify the various factors that influence parents' decisions to be involved in their children's education. These factors are parents' role constructions, parents' sense of efficacy, parents' perception of invitation from the school and

their children, and parents' life contexts. Through this theory, schools, educators and policymakers can develop strategies to use in communicating with parents to foster greater involvement in their schools to improve learners' academic achievement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997; Jovanović, Ristić Dedić & Poredoš 2025).

■ The theory of ecological framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological framework is the third theory used in this study, and it is part of the guiding framework for this study (see Figure 2.2). The framework conceptualises children and families within a broader set of influences, which influence children's health and educational outcomes. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological framework identified five frameworks for children's environment, which all interact with to affect their development: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The different frameworks offer both opportunities and constraints, which operate simultaneously to produce outcomes (Murphy 2020). Rather than attributing PI and engagement solely to parental choice and agency, the framework provides support and understanding of various factors that influence and shape parents' involvement and engagement (Bond, Moore & Hawkins 2024). Factors such as parents' neighbourhoods (mesosystem), school (exosystem), cultural and political climate (macrosystem), and parents' economic circumstances (mesosystem) all relate to influence parents' involvement or engagement in their children's education (Kirksey, Gottfried & Freeman 2024).



Source: Authors' own adaptation based on Bronfenbrenner (1977).

FIGURE 2.2: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

Microsystem: It is the first level of Bronfenbrenner's theory/framework. A microsystem is a 'pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in each setting with physical and material characteristics' (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 22). These are people or things that the child has direct contact with in their immediate environment, such as the child's parents, siblings, classmates, teachers and neighbours (Mutumba, Busingye & Maani 2024). This relationship is bi-directional, which means there is a mutual relationship between two elements, where both can affect each other (Guy-Evans 2024). Children experience a shared relationship with their immediate environments, and they interact and influence one another. For example, parents supporting their children at home, such as assisting with homework and ensuring its completion, talking to their children about school, paying their children's school fees and providing emotional support, may positively influence their children's cognitive and language skills. Conversely, children who are bullied by friends or neighbours might develop negative self-esteem (Guy-Evans 2024).

Mesosystem: This is where the child's microsystems do not function independently but influence one another. The ecosystem is the link that connects the microsystem and the macrosystem, thereby enhancing the development of a child (Chen & Rivera-Vernazza 2022). It is the two or more environments in which the child actively interacts, for example, the relationship between the child's church and neighbourhood or between his educators and parents (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 25). A child whose parents are active partners in his/her education, by attending parent-teacher meetings, assisting with homework and volunteering, can improve academically because of the interaction between the parents and the school. Likewise, if a child has a friend who values reading, that attitude/mindset could influence such a child, leading to such child reading as well (Guy-Evans 2024).

Exosystem: It is the relationship between the school, parents and the community in their children's education. Exosystem is a setting that does not involve children as active participants, but they indirectly influence the child: social media, school boards, extended family support, local governments and friends of the family (Mutumb, Busing & Maani 2024). A parent's place of work or political rules can affect a child's development, and a company's flexible working hours can positively impact the child's emotional development and family relationship. Local government decisions to close a community library to cut the community budget can limit the child's access to educational resources, thereby affecting his/her academic achievement. When the school, educators and community psychologically support the parents, they (parents) tend to have a more positive attitude at home (Flynn & Mathias 2025).

Macrosystem: Macrosystems are the outermost layers in children's environment. This includes the children's culture, morals, values and ideologies, which are not the children's immediate world but are prominent in their lives as they grow (Guy-Evans 2024). The macrosystem is different from the previous ecosystems because it is the child's already established culture in which the child is developing. The macrosystem is the parents' aspirations, values, beliefs, norms and expectations towards their children's education (Çiğdemir 2025).

Chronosystem: These are the changes that happen in children's lives, for example, death of a parent, a change in environment, a parent relocation for work, parental divorce or a family structure which may cause the child stress (Yendork 2020). Children react to issues differently as they grow older; as a result, they become more aware of how these changes affect them (Torres 2024). For example, the use of the Internet has transformed how children communicate, relate and obtain information and affects sleeping patterns, also the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has led to disruption of education leading to only studies, and a shift in family and social interactions all these can have a developmental effect on children (Guy-Evans 2024). Bronfenbrenner's theory states that children's experience at school is not only the interactions between them and their educators, but it involves their parents, community and family members, while understanding the influence of their environment on them provides supportive parents' involvement (Ode Williams 2024). All the theories mentioned in the chapter (Epstein's theory of overlapping, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's theory and Bronfenbrenner's theory) form a roadmap for implementing a system that addresses parents as partners in their children's education (Wildmon et al. 2024). The authors agree that every parent desires the best for their children's education, high-quality and holistic learning in an effective institution. When there are problems, parents need to know and be of help in identifying ways to support their children's education. Parents want to be acknowledged, make input, listened to and contribute to their children's school (Gil & Johnson 2024). Schools must join forces and coordinate efforts to support parents and children so that they can have an enormous impact (Gil & Johnson 2024). Parents who are aware of their roles in the educational development of their children can help promote the successful completion of their formal education. Zondo and Mncube (2024) believe that encouraging parents to participate and take more responsibility would lead to a more effective and well-functioning school. Schools need to train parents and allow them to develop skills and knowledge that will enable them to participate more meaningfully in transforming and improving schools (Gil & Johnson 2024). It is therefore incumbent on schools to empower parents regarding the tasks they are expected to perform.

Also, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory suggests that parents need to desire to be partners in their children's education. However, there are several perceptions that educators are the educational specialists, leading parents to feel that they should not be involved, as educators are seen as the most qualified individuals to guide and shape their children's education (Gomba & Msezane 2024). This theory emphasises that educators alone cannot be responsible for children's education; parents should also actively participate in the process instead of leaving it entirely to educators (Haastrup 2024).

In addition, Bronfenbrenner's theory is relevant to parental partnership in the education of their children because the theory pays attention to children's environment and how it influences their growth and development. Educators, parents and stakeholders who oversee children have a major role to play, and they need to work together to ensure that they provide adequate educational services to reach children. Also, leaders need to educate parents and educators to have expectations in which each person will have to give their very best in the education of their children, not only in words but in action, in which children will also witness the high expectations in their parents about their education (Antony-Newman 2024). Despite all the efforts from the schools and educators to educate and support learners, there are still gaps left by parents who are not actively participating, and educators cannot fill these gaps. When parents are not involved, educators and schools can only try their best to compensate because their effort alone cannot provide the support, guidance and motivation of an involved parent (Liang 2024).

There are specific challenges to each type of involvement, leading to different results for parents, educators and children. Challenges such as parents being partners in their children's education are different at each school, depending on the practices the school provides to accommodate both the learners and their parents. To ensure good and successful parental partnership in schools, there must be a recognition of the overlapping spheres of influence on children's development which is the shared responsibilities; attention must be paid to the different types of parental participation that encourage schools, parents, children and the community to collaborate (Epstein & Sheldon 2002; Kaur 2024).

■ Challenges to parents' involvement in education

Parent involvement in children's education is a contemporary issue in South Africa's educational system. Despite all efforts to encourage parent participation in schools, numerous factors continue to disrupt it.

Parents are not being intentional about their educational involvement; they are only available at their children's schools when they are called for their children's misbehaviour (Adebayo & Heinz 2024). This lack of involvement is supported by Wang et al. (2021), who stated that the school acknowledged the passive involvement displayed by parents in the education of their children. It is believed that parents do not support the school in disciplining their children when invited to do so (Barongo et al. 2024). Instead, they only respond when contacted about their children's misbehaviour. This lack of proactive support leads educators to perceive contacting parents as a waste of time.

Schools are encouraging parents to partner in their children's education by reaching out to them. According to James (2023), educators should explore various methods of communication, including regular outreach and personal updates about their children's behaviours, learning and interactions with peers. Written messages, such as newsletters, letters to parents, daily journals, and notice boards, can also be effective tools for this purpose (James 2023). It was striking to find out during the interview conducted by the researcher recently that some schools do ask learners to stay at home with their parents until their parents are ready to come with them to school when they have committed an offense at school and when all efforts by the school to get across to the parents proved abortive. This shows a lack of educator professionalism, which can eventually lead to children dropping out of school. The authors contend that other effective measures should be put in place to address the reluctance of parents to come to school when invited, such measures include the involvement of the SGB or the school management team (SMT) to handle the situation instead of depriving learners of their right to education, even the school can withhold the child's academic report until the parent comes as earlier invited as a measure to involve parents. This lack of involvement could be the result of the following challenges:

- Parents' employment
- Parents' educational background
- The school structure
- The unwelcoming school educators
- Parents' lack of understanding of their roles
- Parents' social influence
- Parents' lack of sense of efficacy.

Parents' employment: Parents are burdened by low income, inflexible working hours and insufficient financial resources (Freeman 2024). For example, parents who work long hours may have less time to help at home and to be available in school when duty calls (Fan & Moen 2024). Some employers do not allow much time off duty to allow the parent to be

available for school calls, and some parents are even too tired at the end of the day to assist their children with their work when they get home (Blackwell 2024). The shifts associated with these jobs leave parents with very limited time and therefore unable to check their children's work, not to mention supervising them (Munje & Mncube 2018). Some parents are hardly seen at home, which makes some of their children misbehave in the communities (Kyei-Arthur, Kyei-Gyamfi & Appiah 2024).

Parents' educational background: Parents' educational background contributes to their lack of language proficiency and insufficient academic knowledge in communicating with their children's educators (Geduld 2024). Such parents find it difficult to engage in discussions that encourage a friendly environment because of their low educational level, low self-esteem and under-achievement in school themselves (Wang et al. 2022). Some parents lack confidence, possibly because of a language barrier that hinders their ability to communicate effectively with their children's educators (Macphee 2021). Lack of confidence may also come from parents seeing themselves as not being confident enough academically to help their children (Kong & Yasmin 2022), and this is more obvious as children progress especially those children in secondary schools who have more work to do and whose language of instruction is not their first language (Tofai & Khan 2024). For some, it is a result of a negative experience they had either in their children's previous school or during their own schooling days (Kerr et al. 2021).

The unwelcoming school environment structure: School structure is another challenge that confronts efforts towards PI (Epstein 2019). Schools are the ones to create the school policies, norms, values and expectations to make sure the importance of parents' involvement is communicated to parents in an atmosphere of care and trust (Yulianti et al. 2022). School structure refers to a structured system that explains how a school operates, its hierarchy, roles, policies, how responsibilities are distributed, and decision-making to ensure effective teaching and learning (Mincu 2022). While some parents want to get involved in their children's education, they are sometimes discouraged by the school's operational structures (Selolo 2018). A school structure that does not promote children's learning and is not committed to the success of its learners tends to discourage parents' involvement in schools (Epstein 2019). In some schools, the unclear school programmes often confuse the parents, who sometimes are unaware of school operational structures and may not know who to approach on certain issues or may be transferred from pillar to post until they get discouraged (Selolo 2018). When school is orderly and well-structured, this helps parents to view school as a positive environment (Selolo 2019). As a result, their involvement becomes abundant, and learners perform well at school (Park & Holloway 2018).

School environment: The educators may contribute towards discouraging or demoralising parents from getting involved in the education of their children when their attitude towards the parents is not welcoming (Fitriani & Qodariah 2021). Parents feel inferior to approach some educators on issues that affect their children because of their unwelcoming facial expressions, rudeness and lack of communication (Libreros 2024). Educators who are strict and impolite discourage parents from getting involved at school and performing some of the activities that will help their children perform better (Ahmed, Ronka & Perälä-Littunen 2024). Some parents are discouraged by educators who will tell them how illiterate they are and undermine their social life; such parents then get disappointed and will never come again (Ahmed et al. 2024).

Parents' lack of understanding of their roles: Parents' reluctance to get involved in their children's education has been linked to their lack of understanding of their roles in getting involved (Baker, Clayton & Bragg 2021). Parents' decision to become involved in their children's education is based on three constructs, which are parents' aspirations about their children's future, parents' sense of efficacy in educating their children and invitation from the child or the child's school to be involved (Đurišić & Bunijevac 2017). Parents' role construction refers to parents' hopes, goals and beliefs regarding what they need to do about their children's educational attainment (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997). Parents' role construction is likely influenced by general principles guiding the definition of their parental role, beliefs about child development and rearing, and beliefs about appropriate parents' home support roles in children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997). Parents with high aspirations for their children's educational attainment are more likely to be willing to exert efforts to ensure that those aspirations are realised. Children's educational and occupational aspirations are associated with how parents shape children's activities, time and learning environment (Đurišić & Bunijevac 2017). Also, parents have an impact on their children's educational aspirations and engagement, being their first educators (Davis-Kean, Tighe & Waters 2021; Jeynes 2018). The aspiration brings about an increase in their children's academic performance and better school attendance (Erdener & Knoepfel 2018).

Parents' social influence: When discussing parents' choices regarding their involvement in their children's education, the groups to which the parents belong – such as their workplace, family and the child's school – expect certain behaviours related to that involvement. These groups communicate their role expectations to parents (Xin & Yu 2024). The expectations of the group may be quite similar, in which case parents will likely experience not only clarity about the behaviours they are supposed to perform but also consistent environmental pressure and support for

performing those behaviours (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997). Parents are more motivated to be involved in their children's education when there are clear expectations for positive involvement. Conversely, if the prevailing expectations among parent groups are minimal or none, parents tend to become less involved.

■ How can schools encourage parental involvement in schools?

The efforts of schools in facilitating and encouraging parents' involvement in school are diverse. Quite a few pieces of literature suggest 'the importance of the school and parents' connection and how the connection between the parents and the school increases students' success and supports school activities' (Adelabu & Mncube 2023a; Diaz 2023). The difference among parents is that the school differs in how it informs, invites and involves parents. Also, according to Epstein (2018):

[P]arents, schools, and the community need to partner in sharing responsibility at home, school and community to help their children's learning, share information, celebrate success, guide their children, and solve their problems. (Adelabu & Mncube 2023a, p. 112)

According to Radebe (2024), there are some ways to involve parents in school-related activities, such as informal meetings with parents at the beginning of the school year, regular contact with parents and positive phone calls. Schools can also embark on a parent and learners exchange day, an open day, a schoolwide communication plan, a welcome programme for new children and their parents, and involve parents in assessing school policies and practices (Banks, Kea & Coleman 2025; Merritt 2024). Schools can also encourage the parents to have some sort of homework or family project to work on together at home. Schools can encourage parents by creating opportunities for positive interaction at home, which helps parents feel more involved (Eden et al. 2024).

Interacting/communicating with parents: Fakou (2024) has demonstrated that working-class parents believe that educators are responsible for initiating communication, whereas many educators believe that parents should contact them (Fakou 2024). The degree to which the school communicates with parents also determines the parents' involvement in school activities (Lemmer & Van Wyk 2004). To encourage communication between parents and educators, the school must have a range of strategies for both school-to-home and home-to-school communication with all the parents about their children's progress and the school activities for the year (Freund et al. 2018). Also, the communication should be mutual; parents must be given a voice and educators/schools should stop the attitude of patronising themselves to the extent that some parents feel

unappreciated by their behaviour (Freund et al. 2018). Educators must create time for parents whenever they need to see them and make sure they contact those parents who do not contact the school through personal calls or emails (Holmgren 2024). Educators must understand the preferred mode of communication parents want and utilise a variety of means in communicating with the parents (Solano 2022). In addition, educators must communicate with parents regularly through telephone and verbal communication in and around the school, such as during drop-off and pick-up times, if the parent needs to address a problem urgently (Chen & Rivera-Vernazza 2022). Also, communication could be both physical and electronic, such as newsletters, parent letters, short notes in the message or homework books, and notice boards can be used in communicating with parents. Moreover, some parents may prefer electronic communication such as email (Chen & Rivera-Vernazza 2022).

Maintaining a friendly environment: In addition, schools must develop a policy for parents' involvement by maintaining a friendly school environment (Wildmon et al. 2024), having a parents-room in schools, creating more opportunities for input from parents, providing guidance to parents about how to help their children at home, informing parents about behavioural and academic problems of their children, and providing parents with positive feedback about their children (Jaiswal 2017). Parents' active involvement at school includes parents discussing future educational goals; having open interaction with education; and volunteering, field trips and or parent workshops to foster the education of their children. Turnbull et al. (2011), as confirmed by Mugumya, Mwesigye and Ahimbisibwe (2023), summarised seven principles of effective partnership between parents and the school: the school is expected to be reliable, confidential, open, and honest with the parents, and to have mutual rapport concerning opinion and dignity. Schools must have policies that they implement to have greater knowledge of various approaches used in enhancing the relationship between parents and educators (Smith 2024). So that the educator can freely talk to them and encourage them to create a system by which they can help their children with their schoolwork at home (Eklund 2024). They should be supportive of the school while also being reasonable in their expectations.

Promoting learners' culture: School heads can guide their educators in a meeting with the parents, asking about their children's strengths, gifts and weaknesses in their children that they would most appreciate their educator's help (Jeynes 2018). Educators must also take their time in asking about the cultures and religions of each child in their class, making sure that they respect and value each child's culture and religion (Nelson & Yang 2023). Educators must be informed about this (culture/religion) early, as soon as a child starts with a new educator. Educators must ensure that parents are informed about their children's behaviour, and social, emotional

and academic progress (McWayne & Melzi 2024). In addition, school and home relationships are very important, and educators must strengthen the relationship between the school/educators and parents (Epstein 2011). When parents and educators are involved at every stage, there is an improvement in their children's academic achievement (Malik 2023). Parents also have a role to play in ensuring that their involvement in their children's education brings out a meaningful result. Their involvement starts from home in where they can promote a very good performance by setting up educational goals for both them and their children (Wildmon et al. 2024). Parents stimulate their children's cognitive ability by providing educational materials and out-of-school learning, for example, going to zoos, museums and other educational sites (Ebele 2024).

Building trust with parents: Relationships with the parents and a foundation of trust, interaction, friendliness and accessibility are essential for effective PI. Interaction refers to a shared action between two parties, which are the parents and the school (Öberg, Fors & Zdravkovic 2024). Interaction involves schools prioritising open communication with parents to build a mutual and respectful relationship (Wildmon et al. 2024). This includes sharing truthful information and encouraging school meetings to establish rapport with the parent, collaboration must be reciprocated and centred on the child, as well as promoting shared responsibility. There must be a need for effective interaction between parents and schools to foster social skills, learners' academic achievement, better school attendance and good behaviour (Eden et al. 2024). Accessibility refers to the ease with which parents can engage with and participate in their children's educational activities, which are the availability of effective communication channels, the inclusivity of the school and the clarity of information sent to the parents. When the school is easily accessible, it fosters an environment that is welcoming to parents and empowers parents to actively involve themselves in the education of their children (Wildmon et al. 2024). In establishing a mutual relationship, parents should respect educators, and educators must extend the same respect to parents. Without trust and respect, PI in education becomes difficult for both parties (Jeynes 2018). Their communication must be effective, and crucial information must be provided to create an encouraging rapport and trust with parents. The parents must be convinced of the person in charge of their children's education (Đurišić & Bunijevac 2017). When schools lack the trust of parents, this will be difficult for parents to get involved in any school activities (Minix-Fuller 2020).

The issue of parents' involvement in the education of their children has been discussed with the benefits and various challenges faced by both the school and parents. However, it was striking that because of parents' challenges and lack of involvement at the school, the educators believe that it is a waste of time to contact parents. When parents face challenges

that prevent their participation, some educators view involving or contacting them about their child's education as unproductive. In contrast to the overall lack of involvement of parents in schools, some parents do get involved, and then educators tend to think that parents are over-involved. This is one of the reasons why some parents end up getting discouraged from taking part in their children's education because of the fear of 'academic victimisation', where their children get disadvantaged by educators owing to the learners' parents' over-involvement in schools. It is noted also that some parents do not even see any importance in checking their children's report cards, but are only concerned when it is term four, when they know that the term is for promotion to the next class.

■ Contribution to knowledge

The role of parents as partners in education has become a significant focus in research and policy discussions. This approach emphasises collaboration between parents and educators to enhance students' well-being and academic achievement. To make the partnership between parents and schools a reality, parents must be educated about their roles and provided with various strategies for active participation. Additionally, communication between parents and the school must improve to accommodate the diverse circumstances of different families.

■ Conclusion

To experience an improvement in PI in schools, educators and parents must work together. Parents' involvement is recognised by the learners, parents, educators, researchers and other educational stakeholders as important in the successful education of children (Eden et al. 2024). Parent involvement is seen as a predictor of learners' success and total functioning in the school environment. However, educators do not experience parents' support as expected because of the lack of parents' involvement in the education of children and too many reasons such as parents' demanding jobs, poverty, distance from home to their children's school, available time, parents' educational levels and interest in providing support (Vadivel et al. 2023). Taken together, the factors discussed in this chapter shape both the nature and extent of parental involvement, ultimately determining the level of support that parents are able to provide. Even though issues restraining parents' involvement in their children's education are related to circumstances, parents' lack of involvement is viewed differently by educators. It is helpful for schools and educators to try to involve all parents in the education of their children through effective partnerships and enhance the educational experience for everyone involved (Chen & Rivera-Vernazza 2022). All parents must feel welcome to enter the school and

interact with the educators, provided that the allotted time slots are communicated upfront.

Parents must take an active role in every aspect of their children's lives. Their involvement is essential in shaping children's behaviour, particularly when it is managed effectively (Okello 2023). Meaningful participation goes beyond helping with homework and requires deliberate effort. Even with busy schedules, parents should prioritise attending school meetings, visiting schools to monitor their children's behaviour and academic performance, and maintaining open communication with educators (Diaz 2023). These responsibilities cannot rest solely on educators but demand a collaborative and integrated effort, with parents playing an active role in supporting their children's education (Chen & Rivera-Vernazza 2022). The main conclusion of 'parents as partners' is that parents play a crucial role in supporting their children's academic success (Oranga, Matere & Nyakundi 2023). The theoretical frameworks underpinning the study – Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory of PI and the ecological framework – explain the interconnected histories that encourage, socialise and educate children, as well as the evolving skills and shared responsibilities of parents, teachers, the community and children. These frameworks emphasise the various factors (micro, meso, exo, macro and chronosystems) that can influence parents' involvement practices and their children's educational achievements (Guy-Evans 2024). Additionally, they assist educational practitioners in developing effective strategies to promote positive educational outcomes.

The *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* has provided parents with the power to be partners in education. A booklet has also been developed on the guidelines that parents can follow on how to successfully contribute to the education of their children, at home, in their school and in their various communities at large, to enhance learners' academic achievement. Considering this resource, schools should revisit the provisions of the act and conduct sessions with parents to reinforce its importance and promote greater PI.

Parents must be encouraged to be actively involved in the education of their children, and they must see it as their responsibility that no one can compensate them for.

Furthermore, parents must have a good relationship with their children's educators to be able to monitor their children's progress and be informed that their involvement in their children's education is associated with their academic achievement.

Also, the Parent Teacher Association representative and educators must come together using a common language, encourage the active participation of each parent in all school meetings and have programmes where parents can participate in the community's activities.

School heads need to educate parents and educators, and both need to have high expectations in giving their best to their children's education. When school heads maintain high expectations, educators will be able to emulate their school heads, while parents will emulate these from their educators and the children from their parents.

There must be awareness programmes presented at the schools letting parents know that the school is always open for them to visit and that the school activities are planned to suit every parent, whatever their level of education.

Analysing the advancements achieved in inclusive education since its implementation in South Africa

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■ Abstract

This chapter examines the progress of implementing inclusive education (IE) in South Africa from 1994 to 2024. It is supported by the Student-Environment-Tasks-Tools (SETT) framework, developed by Zabala (1995),

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which is a four-pronged framework focusing on a centred approach that customises the learning experience to meet individual learner needs. Researchers employed purposive sampling to engage relevant participants. This chapter addresses the implementation of IE and the challenges encountered since the onset of democracy in South Africa. Given this context, the implementation of IE in South Africa should have made significant strides in ensuring that all learners, regardless of their learning difficulties, receive education in mainstream teaching environments. The findings revealed that teachers lack the relevant competencies to assist learners with learning difficulties (LWLDs). Additionally, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in South Africa has inadequate school infrastructure to support LWLDs, making it challenging for teachers to provide adequate assistance. This study further highlights the role of technological devices in facilitating curriculum delivery to LWLDs. Technologically enhanced learning experiences have the potential to engage even struggling learners. For instance, using YouTube videos allows for curriculum differentiation; digital tools are visually appealing and can accommodate learners with varying abilities. Information and communication technologies can enable teachers and policymakers to expedite the implementation of IE in schools and promote digital citizenship among learners and teachers. Moreover, technology-enhanced capacity development for teachers can reduce training and travel costs, as it can be conducted remotely, thereby ensuring that teachers do not leave learners unattended during teaching hours.

■ Introduction

This chapter outlines the origins of inclusive education (IE) and looks at South Africa's progress since its adoption. Furthermore, the chapter presents the current trends in IE in the country and discusses the findings by respectable scholars in the field of IE. In addition, it will initiate debates on quality IE, which is vital to our book series on IE. Nzuza (2023). Huang and Zhang (2020) assert that the effects of IE are felt globally and further concede that IE debates started in developed countries such as the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Norway before they filtered down to developing countries such as South Africa.

Inspired by the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of the United Nations (UN), the *Salamanca Statement*, issued in 1994 by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), calls for the inclusion of all children in life in general as well as in the educational context in particular, as a way of ensuring that education remains a basic human right. While the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* by the UN was seen as a blessing for the global educational landscape, promoting equality in the pursuit of quality education for all (EFA), it is surprising to note that

the same year, the South African apartheid regime complicated the educational environment, particularly for the 'black child'. The introduction of Bantu education aimed to prepare these children for menial jobs rather than to provide access to essential subjects such as Mathematics. Furthermore, the subjects taught in class were presented in Afrikaans as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). This indicates that while the rest of the world emphasised the importance of human rights, the apartheid government in South Africa was doing the opposite by dividing people, particularly learners, along racial lines. Excluding learners in class effectively means they will have no place in the community or the workforce when they become adults.

For this reason, as an affiliate of UNESCO, the South African government heeded a call to implement IE in education in 2001. In addition, the state acknowledged that IE caters for all learners' education without discrimination and encourages meaningful participation. The following are the UNESCO *Salamanca Statement* (1994) founding principles meant for unifying an integrated and improved education system for every country:

1. Every child has a fundamental right to education.
2. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
3. Education services should consider these diverse characteristics and needs.
4. Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools.
5. Regular schools with an inclusive ethos are the most effective way to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming and inclusive communities and achieve EFA.
6. Such schools provide adequate education to the majority of children, improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
7. Give the highest priority to making education systems inclusive.
8. Adopt the principle of IE as a matter of law or policy.
9. Develop demonstration projects.
10. Encourage exchanges with countries that have experience in inclusion.
11. Set up ways to plan, monitor and evaluate the educational provision for children and adults.
12. Encourage and make accessible the participation of parents and organisations of disabled people.
13. Invest in early identification and intervention strategies.
14. Invest in the vocational aspects of IE.
15. Ensure adequate teacher education programmes (UNESCO 1994, p. 4).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2024) presents a three-pronged achievement by the *Salamanca Statement*, namely, it challenged the idea that some children do not belong in mainstream

schooling; it challenged the polarisation of education for different children, and it ushered in the concept of IE to the broader community. For IE to occur, every learner must access education, irrespective of race, culture, geographical orientation, gender and socio-economic status (UNESCO 2024). Conversely, the *Salamanca Statement* declared access to education as a basic human right, potentially ending discrimination among people (Kanyopa 2023). In the voice of Anthos (2024), teachers are responsible for embracing diversity in their interactions with learners. This will become possible when teachers guide learners without challenges to accommodate and accept those with learning difficulties. It is for this reason that Hebebcı (2023) highlights the value of not only considering children with disabilities (CWDs) when IE is implemented but even those marginalised because of poverty, geographical location, pandemics, natural disasters, their culture or the upheaval brought by war. Similarly, Njeri, Smith and Ayako (2023) assert that the majority of teachers were willing and had accepted the need to implement IE, to be there for those learners who experience barriers to learning, and that will only be realised once all the stakeholders put their hands on deck to give teachers required support and level the playing fields in terms of providing adequate infrastructure and competencies to make IE implementation a reality. Concurring with the premise of IE, Hebebcı (2023) concedes that good practices, such as welcoming all learners and nurturing their talents, regardless of their race, gender, intellectual disabilities, or physical and emotional or human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV and AIDS) status, should be prevailing in inclusive schools for learners to feel included in that inclusive environment. Following the same line of thought, Nzuza (2023), in his qualitative study, views IE as a process of ensuring that all learners have equal access to educational opportunities in any main stream school (a school that caters only for the learners with barriers to learning), irrespective of their intellectual capability, religious background, culture, socio-economic status or sexual orientation.

The policy entitled *Inclusive Education White Paper (EWP) 6: Special Needs Education* (Republic of South Africa [RSA] 2001) promotes a single, undivided education system for all learners to end the division between mainstream and special schools. This implies that every school must be full-service with all the required infrastructure and trained personnel for IE to be effectively implemented. The study by Walton and Engelbrecht (2024) affirms that IE is the right of every child, not the privilege of the selected few.

■ The background

In a report of a qualitative study by Nzuza (2023), it is conceded that India, as a signatory of the *Salamanca Statement*, introduced the Integrated

Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) Project in 1974 as an attempt to heed a call for the provision of equal educational opportunities for CWDs in a mainstream schooling environment. After the introduction of the *Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995*, CWDs were able to enjoy the education experience in the same schooling environment as all other learners, irrespective of their ability status and physical and psychological barriers. It is for this reason that the Indian Ministry of Human Resources Development declared that all Indian schools would be disability-friendly to every Indian child (Nzuza 2023). Conversely, Nzuza (2023) argues that all the attempts by the Indian government seemed to be talk shops in that there was a remarkable gap between the policy and the practice. This was evidenced by the 94% representation of CWDs at the national level in the state of India. Contrary to this notion, a study by Indumathi (2023) asserts that Indian schools have started accommodating children with special needs (CWSNs) into the mainstream learning environment. He argues that this was made possible via the implementation of a no-rejection policy, which promoted the acceptance of every learner into the mainstream learning environment irrespective of the severity of their conditions (Indumathi 2023).

Furthermore, a qualitative study conducted by Sakiz, Ekinici and Bas (2020) in Turkey revealed that providing resources, culture and religious beliefs was not aligned with the practical intentions of ensuring that every Turkish learner has access to quality education. This is in contravention of Article 2 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, which declares that:

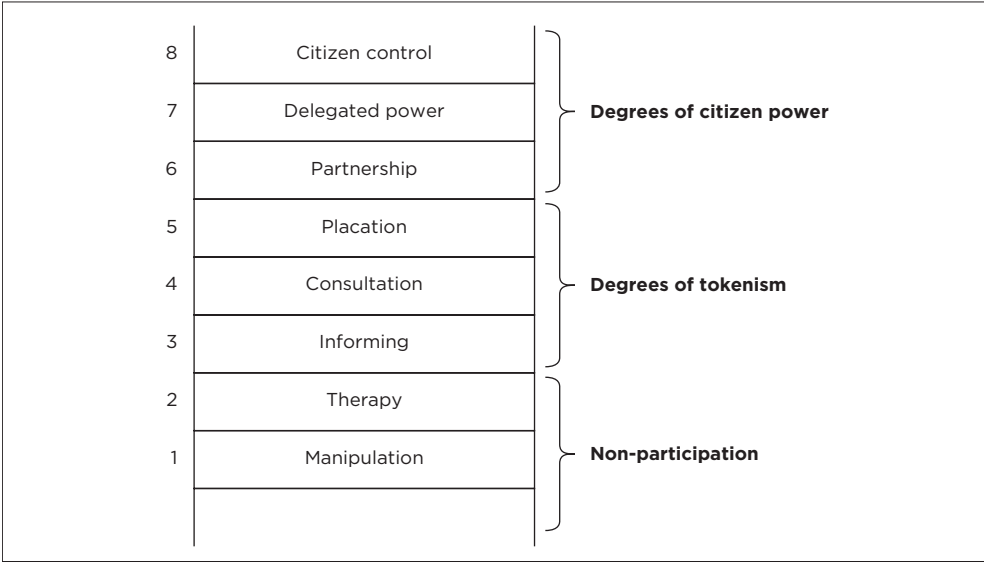
In those States in which ethnic or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their religion, or to use their language. (Sakiz et al. 2020, p. 296)

It, therefore, becomes an added responsibility on the shoulders of the Turkish government to ensure that the rights of minorities are protected without fail, including access to quality education via inclusive platforms.

Sakiz et al. (2020) and the United States Department of State Report on International Religious Freedom (2023) affirm that for the school to properly assess its effectiveness and relevance in meeting the criterion of IE requirements, the issue of policy, religion, culture, practices and the school's holistic approach must be scrutinised very closely. This is known to be the most relevant perception of what the concept IE entails, unlike the one that only looks at inclusivity in terms of a medical point of view, without taking into account the issue of language, religion, race, socio-economic status and physical ability into consideration, when it comes to IE.

The practical example presented by Sakiz et al. (2020) is that of imposing the Muslim religion and religious education on all Turkish learners, while the constitution of that country in Article 2 qualifies it as a democratic country. In the same breath, Article 24 of the same constitution contradicts Article 2, where it empowers the state to have complete control over educational matters and religious ethics, thereby mandating teaching in religious culture and moral education based on Muslim beliefs. This finding constrains democratic values and principles, which rate respect for the rights of minorities very highly.

Furthermore, this kind of practice deprives children of minority groups access to education in their language, religion and culture (Sakiz et al. 2020). Wars in Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine and the migration wave to Turkey necessitated policymakers in those countries to consider multiculturalism to promote diversity and inclusion in that particular country (Direkseneli 2023; Sakiz et al. 2020). The main objective behind this arrangement is to ensure that all learners are included in the curriculum matters so that they get the required support to meet their full potential. Conversely, Sakiz et al. (2020) concede that the parental representatives of minority groups are of the view that they are excluded from the decision-making processes about governance matters in schools. Furthermore, the findings by Sakiz et al. (2020) and Bridgeman (2024) reveal that both learners and parents coming from minority groups are exposed to micro-aggression in the school setting that they are made to feel uncomfortable by Turkish teachers and learners in terms of being made to feel welcomed



Source: Author's own work adapted from Bridgeman (2024, p. 217).
FIGURE 3.1: Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation.

in as far as the discrimination they get when verbal remarks are passed on in their presence. Figure 3.1 shows the ladder of participation by citizens.

This figure depicts the stage where the minorities at the bottom of the ladder have decisions taken for them by higher authorities, while at the top, citizens are given the platform to share their views. This can be aligned with the school setting, where parents from minority groups are excluded from the decision-making processes in the school. At the same time, those from the affluent part of the community have their voices taken into account by the authorities. The same goes for the policy on ensuring that the schooling environment, in terms of extra-curricular activities, accommodates learner diversity and tolerates and accepts learners from other cultures within the school, including all the stakeholders.

In the same breath, Ghana received her independence in 1968 and was also an attendee as well as the signatory of the *Salamanca Statement* in Spain and asserted that education is a fundamental human right that must be enjoyed by all her citizenry, irrespective of gender, religion, socio-economic status, colour, race or creed. After introducing the *Education Act of 1961*, Ghana mandated all its citizenry to have equal educational opportunities in the normal schooling environment, irrespective of gender, socio-economic status, colour, creed or disability status. This was realised by introducing and adopting the Special Education Needs Policy Framework within the *Inclusive Education Policy* (Government of Ghana Ministry of Education 2013), which touched on educational segregation and educational inequalities affecting children with barriers to learning. Furthermore, Ghana had anticipated that her playing fields would be level by 2015 to ensure that EFA is achieved for all her citizenry. Contrary to that, Ghana failed to address issues such as adequate training and reciprocal working relationships between teachers and parents, as all these activities remain a pipedream.

Recent studies highlight the plight facing the implementation of quality IE in the rural settings of Bangladesh. For example, the survey conducted by Hossain, Chowdhury and Mahbub (2024) reveals that poverty, gender inequality, ethnicity, remoteness, language barriers, challenges faced by CWDs and the adverse effects of natural disasters – such as seasonal flooding, landslides and civil unrest – make implementing quality IE a daunting task for both state and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The research findings in Bangladesh reveal that teachers are making significant efforts to use contextualised multilingual learning materials (MLEs) and to become proficient in assistive technologies, such as braille and hearing devices. This commitment helps them remain relevant to all learners, including those with visual impairments and hearing (Hossain et al. 2024). In addition to that, Algerian educators value the role of involving parents in the effective implementation of quality IE (Latreche & Hoadji 2023). Conversely, Ahmed (2024) asserts that Bangladesh does

have minority groups whose language and culture get sidelined when it comes to learning materials in the mother tongue for minorities and the policies on the implementation of IE. This, therefore, serves as a drawback towards the realisation of quality EFA, including the total implementation of diversity and quality IE, hence a call by the Bangladesh government to come up with teacher training programmes aimed at addressing the issues of IE in terms of ensuring that the needs of learners from diverse groups. This includes those from ethnic communities, socio-economically disadvantaged sectors and disaster-stricken areas, who meet whenever IE is discussed or implemented (Ahmed 2024). Hossain et al. (2024) further highlight the plight faced by children in rural communities when it comes to accessing equal educational opportunities and indicate that such children get left out and face marginalisation in terms of inadequate financial support and having schools located far away from them such that they become inaccessible, which ultimately makes IE implementation a big challenge, especially during the times of natural disasters.

Diverting attention is being paid to higher education institutions (HEIs), and recent studies reveal the steps taken by institutions of higher education towards the total implementation of IE. For instance, the qualitative research conducted by Ramaahlo (2021) highlighted South African universities' attempts to ensure that an IE system prevails, as they tried by all means to respond to the demands and suggestions presented by the 4-A framework. The framework is a five-pronged approach that calls for the education system to ensure availability, accessibility, acceptance, adaptation and affordability for all its students (Ramaahlo 2021). Furthermore, these researchers unequivocally state that education affordability remains a significant challenge of the five IE indicators. This would have ensured the serving of the larger population of students by the universities as opposed to addressing the educational needs of the selected few, as was the case before the fifth indicator of inclusion was brought to light. Walton and Engelbrecht (2024) argue that South Africa has good policies regarding making higher education affordable to even students with disabilities (SWDs). Still, the practice remains wishful thinking, considering the work needed before universal access to quality higher education is realised in South Africa. This implies that a lot of effort needs to be put into ensuring that policies are turned into reality via the total implementation thereof, thanks to the paradigm shift of perceiving access to education as one of the fundamental human rights. In the South African context, learners in primary education may claim to have been included in education irrespective of their socio-economic status. According to the *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996*, no child must be excluded from accessing education if his or her parents cannot pay the school fees.

For this reason, the category of no-fee-paying schools came into existence. This was an attempt to avoid inclusivity based on the child's socio-economic status. In the same breath, the South African government responded by introducing *EWP 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* in 1997, which is popularly known as the Transformation of Higher Education System – which called for non-discrimination and equal access to education, including SWDs as an attempt to address the injustices of the past that were created by the apartheid regime, which promoted Bantu education and the polarisation of education systems in one country (Ramaahlo 2021). This implies that not only will a specific category of students be accommodated in the HEIs, but all students have a right to access education in such institutions, irrespective of their disability status and otherwise. Similarly, Saidi (2024) concedes that the policies on inclusion are vocal in insisting that all students must be included in accessing quality education, but are silent regarding how much will be realised in terms of the provisions thereof. This implies that such policies, namely the EWP 6 and 7, must be clear and practical in terms of the guidelines that must be followed for the HEIs to ensure equal and equitable access to education by all her student population, irrespective of their gender, socio-economic status, language, religion, physical disability and or race. A qualitative study by Ramaahlo (2021) reveals the low uptake by the HEIs in terms of SWDs, low uptake of postgraduate students, high dropout rates and many years spent by undergraduate students to complete their degrees and poor supervisory capacity, with better attendance in the white-dominated universities and poor attendance in the previously black HEIs. Similarly, Ntombela (2020) cites the lack of lecturer immediacy and emotional distance that SWDs feel in universities that use distance and online teaching modalities. This highlights the need to employ new strategies for IE to reach an all-inclusive and encompassing approach.

Similarly, Fernández-Batanero, Montenegro-Rueda and Fernández-Cerero (2022) assert that the low uptake of SWDs in the HEIs is still marred with a myriad of issues, ranging from the lack of SWD-friendly infrastructure to SWD-aligned technologies. Furthermore, Ntombela (2020) argues that in well-resourced HEIs, there seems to be adequate support for SWDs as there are well-established disability units. This finding aligns well with the support learners with disabilities (LWDs) enjoy in the former Model C schools, where the emphasis is placed on supporting all the children under their care. This nature of affairs affirms that South Africa has a long way to go before universal access to quality education becomes a reality. Such disparities are associated with the inequalities in resource provision in those institutions.

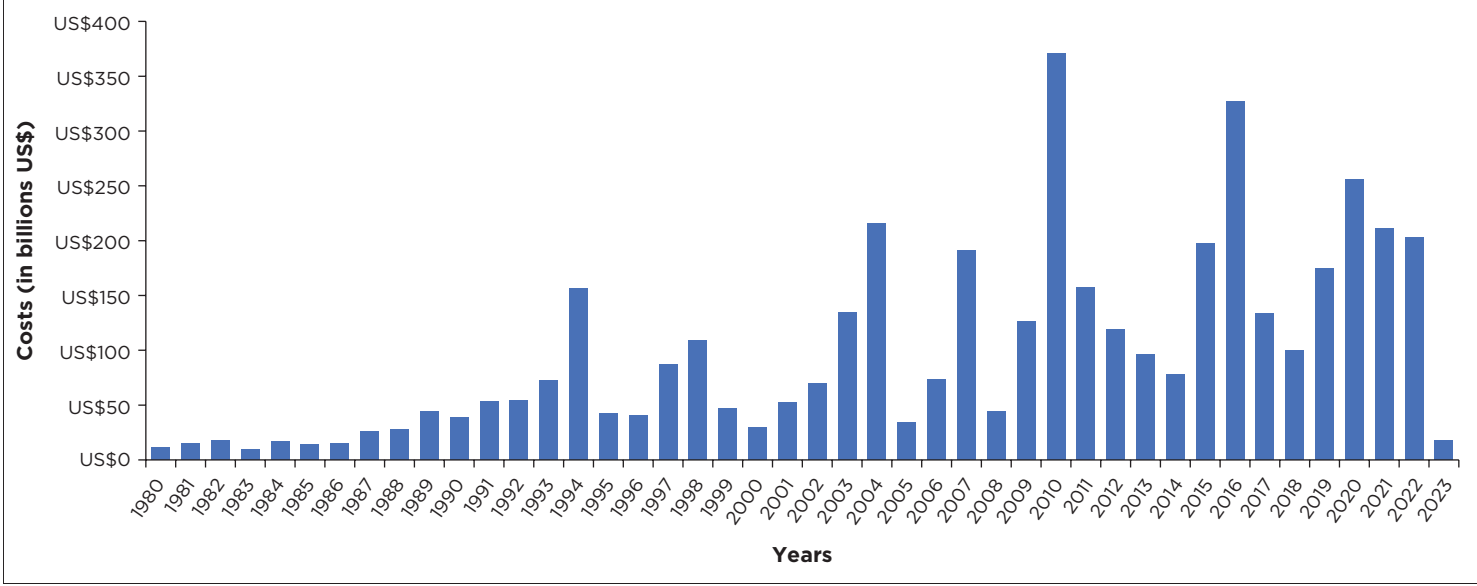
■ Looking at the inclusive education implementation during challenging times

Do natural hazards have any impact on learners' academic performance? Recent studies reveal that natural hazards such as floods, landslides, tsunamis and volcanoes devastated educational resources, including the infrastructure for educational attainment. For instance, the study by Hebebcı (2023) reveals that when natural disasters such as floods, veld fires and earthquakes occur, stakeholders involved in education, such as teachers and learners, get displaced, and the state has to solicit assistance from the army to airlift victims and examination papers to safety. This implies that valuables such as mobile phones, identity documents and money are lost, compelling the victims to reapply for such invaluable documentation, making their lives uncomfortable.

Furthermore, parents are affected economically as they have to find alternative forms of transport to ensure that their children do not miss out on education, and this nature of events has both short- and long-term effects on human lives in general. The findings from the study conducted by Huesler (2024) claim that natural hazards tend to increase the repetition statistics in the secondary school phase compared to other levels of schooling. He further aligns this trend to the emotional scars such disasters leave on the lives of young adults when they happen to lose their parents during natural disasters. This implies that every country needs to craft disaster management policies and evacuation plans that are implementable to mitigate the effects of natural disasters.

Figure 3.2 shows the increasing global costs caused by natural disasters from 1980 to 2023. This implies that poor countries will be significantly affected as they mostly do not have evacuation plans or the technology to track and monitor the weather phenomena that lead to such disasters. Furthermore, policymakers need to invest in social development initiatives to have competent human capital that can assist in the establishment of flood and disaster-friendly infrastructure while at the same time ensuring that people settle above the flood line in an attempt to protect themselves against floods during tsunamis and when storm surges strike.

Similarly, do countries have lasting solutions for IE implementation in war-torn regions? There is a growing concern among scholars that leaders start wars and conflicts, and it is the civilians who are bearing the



Source: Adapted by the authors from the report by Ritchie, Rosado and Roser (2024).

FIGURE 3.2: Global damage costs from natural disasters from 1980 to 2023.

brunt and suffering the long-term effects of such poor, inhumane and irrational decisions leaders make. For instance, a qualitative study by Muthanna, Almahfali and Haider (2022) asserts that education can only thrive where peace and tranquillity exist. This implies that the country may have a beautiful infrastructure and world-class facilities. Still, the absence of peace will make education suffer, as it is affirmed that it is the cornerstone for every country that aspires to develop and lay good foundations for future generations. In a nutshell, children residing in a war-torn country are excluded from the teaching and learning processes. One may argue that technology can be used to rescue the situation. Still, the fact of the matter is that young children need that personal interaction with their teachers to get prompt and quick assurance and affirmation during face-to-face interaction with their teachers (Muthanna et al. 2022).

Muthanna et al. (2022) and Salha, Tlili and Shehata (2024) argue that wars devastate education because teachers and learners operate under horrifying and challenging conditions. Furthermore, their effects negatively impact their thinking to such an extent that the quality of education offered during wars may be drastically lowered. This is because young learners may be recruited to serve in the army, their families may be displaced, teachers may be kidnapped, and other stakeholders may be exposed to traumatic conditions. In poorer countries, funds may be depleted, so services such as school nutrition, teacher salaries and scholar transport for no-fee-paying schools may be halted. This harms education, and the poorest of the poor may be excluded from the teaching and learning process. These events make life difficult for ordinary citizens, and LWDs will feel the worst effects. This is because, during wars, parents and their siblings will be on the run to save their lives, and they will be left with no one to support them.

Muthanna et al. (2022) assert that wars and conflicts lead to exclusion. For instance, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) accounted for an increase in school-going refugee children in Syria, whose number increased from 100,000 to 1.3 million within 3 years between 2012 and 2015, while the other 1.4 million children were at risk of being displaced by wars. This means that children are affected psychologically during wars, which automatically leads to poor academic performance scores. Similarly, Yemeni accounts for 62% of girl children who dropped out of school, while 3,700 schools were closed because of conflicts in those areas. Approximately 1.8 million learners were entirely deprived of educational opportunities, with 195 schools destroyed and 466 schools converted to evacuation centres for displaced people. This nature of events paints a very gloomy picture that wars and conflict bring to the educational space, thereby excluding innocent children from education and infringing upon their human right to access education. The displaced communities and their children face the

cultural shock in their new living environments, leaving behind both the emotional and psychological scars caused by discrimination and marginalisation.

Similarly, according to the *World Declaration on Education for All* (1990), no child or adult should be excluded from accessing the benefits of education meant to address their basic needs and are geared towards increasing opportunities to meet their learning needs. Salha et al. (2024) assert that education in war-torn areas becomes the responsibility of parents and neighbours when teachers cannot assist. Furthermore, they claim that technology and oral traditions become viable modes of teaching in these areas (Salha et al. 2024).

Similarly, in the South African context, *Act 108 of 1996*, popularly known as the South African Constitution, acknowledges that every South African citizen has a basic right to education (Nzuza 2023). This can only be achieved so that diversity, social justice and the complete removal of exclusion in the schooling environment are dealt with decisively. Correspondingly, Nzuza (2023) argues that IE has everything to do with a medical-deficit model point of view for some South African citizens. He further affirms that Bantu education and the policy of apartheid were dismantled in 1994, but the legacy of apartheid and its traces are still felt even during the democratic era. Additionally, he argues that this is manifested by poor academic performance in the so-called one united education system, with private schools and former Model C schools achieving better results compared to the township and rural schools in terms of academics (Nzuza 2023). This indicates the discrimination against low-income people using socio-economic status as a tool, meaning that IE has not yet been fully implemented. In the same breath, Nzuza (2023) and McKeever (2024) affirm that South Africa is an unequal society. This is also evidenced in her schooling system, which comprises two worlds: schools with well-resourced and well-developed infrastructure and, on the other hand, schools that are poorly equipped and lacking basic amenities. This became even more glaring during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which saw the better-resourced schools continuing with their academics using online platforms as the teaching and learning pedagogies. In contrast, the poor-resourced schools had no other options after their shutdown, as the online infrastructure was not an option in their surroundings (McKeever 2024; Nyawo 2023). Furthermore, this highlights the disparities between the rich and the poor in the South African educational environment.

The South African government has tried to accommodate every child in the mainstream schooling environment. This finding is affirmed in the report by the Equal Education Law Centre (EELC 2015), which asserts that

children with severe disabilities must be accommodated via the IE framework as a tool. This is enshrined in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996*, Section 29, ss. 1, par. a. According to the EWP 6 of 2001, as indicated in the EELC (2015, p. 6), doors of learning shall be opened via the removal of the following barriers:

- Establishing full-service schools
- Converting special schools into resource centres
- Training education managers and teachers
- Developing institutional and district support structures and pursuing a funding strategy.

Furthermore, the EWP 6 also impresses upon the need for a paradigm shift from the apartheid education system that was operating in silos in terms of separating departments of education along racial lines, where a lot of the budget was allocated to white minorities. There is also an urgent need for South African stakeholders to be capacitated in terms of better understanding the concept from that one of referring to exclusion based on medical terms to the one based on social disability and, in addition to that, a solid call to changing peoples' mindset from using the terminology of 'disability' to using 'learning difficulties' (EELC 2015). This is because the former terminology is discriminating and exclusionary, while the latter is, by its very nature, inclusionary. This is because every individual experiences learning difficulty, regardless of race, gender, religious orientation or beliefs.

Recent studies reveal worrying concerns regarding the gaps between the policy on IE and the practice. For instance, according to EELC (2015) and Mpanza and Govender (2022), it is confirmed that the status quo remains that of the apartheidisation of IE. This is because the state has managed to advocate for IE. The conversion of all schools into full-service schools by allowing children with learning difficulties to attend mainstream schools has failed dismally to level the playing fields in terms of training enough personnel and providing the required infrastructure for this activity to be a complete success story. This implies that the state failed to remove the barriers that were key to the realisation of the full implementation, such as the inability to establish fully inclusive schools and special schools as resource centres and their failure to integrate learners with learning barriers into the mainstream schooling environment; inability to provide teaching and learning support as well as the failure to train competent teachers on supporting learners with barriers to learning over and above their inability to establish and capacitate school-based support teams (SBSTs) (EELC 2015; Mpanza & Govender 2022). This is because the state has failed to convert 500 primary schools into fully inclusive schools that were to serve as training centres for the neighbouring schools, while at the same time honing the skills of the serving educators

from various schools to be competent on how to work and supporting learners with learning difficulties (LWLDs). Confirming this finding, the progress report on IE in 2015 revealed that only 80 out of 285 special schools in South Africa had the required resources to be resource centres (EELC 2015). Surprisingly, by 2015, 597,953 LWLDs in South Africa were dropouts. This is alarming because EWP 6 was introduced in 2001, and within 14 years, the numbers have increased from 280,000 in 2001. The research findings align this state of affairs with incorrect referrals, traumatic waiting lists and the lack of an unreliable scholar transport for LWLDs. This finding defeats the objectives of the EWP 6 (2001), which calls for every child to be supported in the mainstream schooling environment. This is because the findings touch on the waiting lists and referrals, which create the impression that such learners are excluded from the mainstream schooling environment and belong to a particular school. This is further worsened by the fact that there is a lack of trained SBSTs in schools to give such learners the support they deserve. This implies that the status quo in South Africa remains that of referring learners to particular schools despite the introduction of EWP 6 and the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policies. This finding in the EELC (2015, p. 18) and Mpanza and Govender (2022) aligns well with the following guardian participant, who indicated:

‘She has been on a waiting list for a special school for more than 6 years. Her grandmother is very concerned about her academic performance.’

Another finding by EELC (2015, p. 17) revealed:

‘Susan is 8 years old, who was diagnosed with Cerebral Cysticercosis and has undergone brain surgery. She did not make it in Grade 1, and her teacher wrote the following on her performance report: (i) The school does not have the relevant learning material and resources to support Susan. (ii) Susan is a slow learner and could not complete the prescribed curriculum. (iii) the school does not have the human resources and necessary skills to assist Susan. (iv) The foundation phase Grades 1 to 3 have between 42 and 45 learners, and as a result, they cannot provide Susan with the one-on-one attention that she requires. (v) The school does not have the necessary facilities to assist Susan. (vi) The teacher must adapt her learning methods to suit Susan’s needs.’

The above utterances reveal some teachers’ under-preparedness regarding accommodating LWLDs. It further highlights the mismatch between the policy on inclusion and what is happening in schools daily. Furthermore, the utterances indicate the harsh realities children with learning difficulties face concerning some teachers’ poor level of inclusive language. This is indicated by the teacher, who still categorises and shames the child by calling her a slow learner. This kind of language is, by its very nature, exclusive.

Furthermore, the failure of the state to support learners with learning barriers contributes massively to the high dropout rate in the country

among those LWLDs (EELC 2015). In addition to the contributing factors to the low uptake by mainstream schools, there was a 13-year gap between the introduction of EWP 6 in 2001 and the SIAS Policy in 2014.

What is more disheartening is that the curriculum offered in the mainstream schooling environment does not address the individual needs of LWLDs (EELC 2015). This finding is confirmed by the fact that some blind learners accommodated in mainstream schooling tend to wait up to three years before they are supplied with their Braille stationery. This finding makes life challenging and frustrating for all stakeholders willing to support the child, including those who raised false hopes by admitting them to the mainstream learning space. Furthermore, findings revealed that some officials at the district level displayed a lack of clear understanding of the guidelines and policies on inclusion required of them. In a nutshell, South Africa has crafted beautiful and promising policies on IE. Still, the state has failed to level the playing field in providing the required support to implement such policies. This finding aligns well with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) report (2023) on learner enrolment for LWLDs, which indicates that by the year 2022, there were 489 special schools, with 139,343 learner enrolments, while the country prided itself on 832 full-service schools countrywide and also 121,461 LWLDs attending public ordinary schools. The report further reveals that there are provinces, such as Mpumalanga, where learners were accommodated in inappropriate facilities, as per the report presented by the portfolio committee after their visit. This further worsens the situation for those LWLDs, whose rights to access education are infringed upon by the very people whom they believe are their only hope.

Ultimately, the issue of quality IE for all remains nothing but a pipedream, even in the South African context.

■ Theoretical framework

This chapter is buttressed by the student, environment, tasks and tools (SETT) theory, developed by Zabala (1995). The SETT framework relates to a strategy meant to collect data and organise it in such a manner that it contributes to effective and efficient decision-making processes that are key in supporting educational programmes tailored to the needs of LWLDs (Zabala 1995). This framework calls for the collection of data regarding the learners' abilities, strengths, weaknesses, environment, the physical set-up and the instructional pedagogies used, learner activities designed to attract their interest, over and above the curriculum objectives that are customised to suit their needs with the intention to complete the learner-centred tasks (Hove & Phasha 2024). The SETT theoretical framework was deemed relevant for this chapter because it enables the researcher to touch on the

learners' weaknesses and strengths, thereby enabling teachers to design their programmes with their learners' weaknesses and strengths in mind, as an attempt to promote inclusion in their lesson presentations. Furthermore, the SETT theoretical framework is a four-pronged approach based on the learner tasks, tools and the learner/student's environment (Zabala 2010).

Having looked at the four pillars of the SETT theory, the researcher believed it is critical to inform stakeholders to make informed decisions, which are indispensable for effective problem-solving processes. The study by Aldehami (2023) asserts that the SETT theory is relevant in the IE space, as it values every learner in the educational environment and regards them as essential role players in their learning for the desired outcomes. In this case, assistive technologies are used to address individual learner needs.

■ Discussion of findings

This chapter discusses the following themes:

- Inadequate understanding of IE as a hindrance
- Hindrances to the implementation of IE
- Possible mechanisms to better implement IE.

The research findings reveal that almost three decades after the adoption of EWP 6, South Africa is still battling with the effective implementation of IE for several reasons. For instance, in a qualitative study by Nyawo (2023), the findings revealed that some teachers still lack the proper conceptual understanding of IE, and that is a clear indication that a lot of work needs to be carried out before it is effectively implemented, as one of the teacher participants indicated:

'Inclusive education considers that learners facing similar challenges must be taught in the same environment and not be left at home. This means that parents must ensure that learners are enrolled in schools catering to their challenges or disabilities. For example, a deaf learner must be placed with other deaf learners so that no learner can be undermined.'

Another teacher participant had the following to say:

'When discussing inclusive education, we discuss a form of knowledge delivered holistically to individuals or groups to avoid leaving out any information.'

These utterances reveal teachers' misconceptions regarding their understanding of IE. This raises questions about whether we have competent personnel to implement IE. It has been proved by many scholars that there exist a lot of misconceptions among teachers regarding their understanding of IE. For instance, in the qualitative study conducted by Nzuzi (2023, p. 113), the findings revealed that both locally and at a global scale, stakeholders have varying understanding of IE and are also battling to come to terms with it, as one teacher participant indicated:

'IE is about learners' schooling experiences to ensure inclusivity by providing education for all learners irrespective of their educational level. All learners deserve a quality education that gives them opportunities for lifelong learning at their levels. It leads me to pronounce that IE is for all learners experiencing learning barriers who are supposed to be valued as members of their school society. IE addresses diversity in schools and minimises referring learners to special schools [...] I am for the idea that IE is for special schools. How will schools embrace all cultures regardless of colour if they refer learners to special schools?'

Teacher participant 3 in the study by Nzuza (2023, p. 111) echoed these sentiments and made the following utterance:

'IE is where all learners, regardless of their educational challenges, are accommodated and provided with extra help in the same school to reach their educational goals. Therefore, IE entails including all learners in the mainstream school during teaching and learning irrespective of where they come from, their socioeconomic background and learning styles. And I believe IE pertains to reaching out to every learner during the learning process, accepting learners as they are then attending to learners' differences and abilities in the schooling system so that all learners can achieve.'

These utterances by teachers indicate that learners need support and are not supposed to be judged or discriminated against by their teachers. Failure to do so will ensure that the status quo in our classrooms remains of sustaining exclusive learning milieus, and this lack of clear and shared understanding by teachers of IE is problematic after almost 23 years of having EWP 6 (RSA 2001) promulgated. Similarly, Mncube and Lebopa (2020), Materechera (2020) and Nzuza (2023) highlight overcrowded classes as one of the myriad challenges that teachers are to grapple with in an attempt to implement IE in their teaching pedagogies. In the same breath, Strogilos, Lim and Binte Mohamed Buhari (2023) highlights the inflexible and undifferentiated curricula as one of the barriers that bar teachers from effectively implementing IE, as their approaches are geared towards the completion of the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) and not tailor-made to meet the unique needs of each learner in class. This corroborates the discord between policy and practice, as DBE (RSA 2022) indicates, as the teachers' rush to complete the syllabi is met with disruptions by learners with special needs who try to draw the teachers' attention as they feel neglected during the learning process. This is further aggravated by the outbreak of natural disasters such as COVID-19, which led to the implementation of rotational attendance in overcrowded schools. This meant that more days of teaching were lost in the process. This begs the question of whether teachers know precisely what to do in class or if the policy clearly defines what teachers must do for IE to be effectively implemented.

For this reason, the delegation by DBE (RSA 2022) recommended the delivery of content in the mother tongue. These findings refute the assertion by the SETT theoretical framework, which emphasises the learner's strengths and weaknesses as an attempt to design programmes that will

be tailor-made to suit their needs. They are also a clear indication that the state does not level the playing fields in terms of assisting the teachers in the better understanding and the nature of support they need to give to learners as per the requirements of EWP 6 (2001) and the SIAS policies (2014). These findings are not in line with the SETT theoretical framework by Zabala (1995), which advocates for the student to be well-understood by the teacher for the teacher in question to prepare relevant tasks that are tailor-made to suit the needs of an individual learner in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. This implies that, while teachers have diverse understandings of IE, the quality and the uniqueness of their tasks are still questionable, let alone addressing the needs of individual learners.

In a qualitative study conducted by Leijen, Arcidiacono and Baucal (2021) in Serbia, the findings revealed that many stakeholders subscribe to implementing IE but simultaneously display different understandings of the concept under discussion. This finding is in line with Leijen et al. (2021), who asserted that stakeholders believe that children must be placed in a disability-friendly environment so that they can learn together, while the reality dictates that the unique nature of children makes them learn more quickly in an environment that suits their needs and aspirations. Furthermore, Leijen et al. (2021) affirm that teachers have no qualms about implementing IE, provided they are entirely given the required support, training and infrastructure to implement quality IE in their teaching environments. Contrary to this belief, Leijen et al. (2021) concede that children must be given access to equal educational opportunities and competencies, and that can only be realised if the playing fields are levelled in terms of breaking all the barriers of categorising schools into particular and the mainstream schooling to classifying them as the mainstream schools. This is intended to equip them with skills and competencies that will ensure that they are part of the community that is prepared to share the living space and have all the skills and competencies of living and tolerating other people both in the workplace and in the community at large; hence, a call to educate every child irrespective of their gender, religion, language, culture and the disability status in the environment that puts no conditions upfront for such children to access education. The findings highlighted in the discussion above bring two schools of thought to light. The short-term school of thought is where CWDs are separated from the mainstream schooling environment, where they live without any fear of discrimination by their fellow learners and teachers. It must be indicated that this school of thought is short-lived in the sense that such learners will grow up and become adults who are not equipped and exposed to how they can live and share the space with other people from different backgrounds. On the other hand, a long-term school of thought highlights the value of accommodating CWDs in the mainstream schooling environment, which is inclusive in

nature and values diversity. This becomes the ideal environment to groom young adults who will become good citizens, having learnt to value and appreciate other children's unique talents, languages, religions, culture, socio-economic status and abilities.

The research findings reveal the following hindrances as barriers towards the implementation of IE:

- Stakeholder under-preparedness
- The lack of political will
- Failure to implement the SIAS Policy.

■ Stakeholder under-preparedness

According to the EELC (2015), the SIAS Policy defines learning barriers as 'difficulties' that arise from the education system as a whole, the learning environment and the individual learner. These barriers limit opportunities for access to learning and development. The SIAS Policy (RSA 2014) is implemented in some schools, particularly former Model C schools. Many LWDs qualify for concessions in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, while very few public and township schools have learners in this category. This highlights the need for adequate training and support from teachers and monitoring of the implementation of the SIAS Policy. This is because SIAS serves as a strategy to end the exclusion of learners with difficulties from attending mainstream schooling (EELS 2015). Titus, Mncube and Lebopa (2020) argue that the lack of training on the side of stakeholders leads to frustration and marginalisation by affected learners. This happens when teachers identify the learner with barriers and refer such a learner to the SBST, who then escalate the matter to the DBE's circuit-based support team (CBST) and then to the district-based support team (DBST). The learner waits long to access relevant support. This gives the School Assessment and Integrity Committee (SAIC) no alternative but to progress that 'limping child'.

Conversely, DBE (2011) concedes that teachers and principals are better placed to apply curriculum differentiation if faced with presenting lessons and supporting children with learning difficulties. This implies that mainstream schools are expected to help learners with physical disorders, hyperactive learners, those with deficit disorders, autistic learners, the ones with dyslexia, as well as those with behavioural problems under one roof, over and above the ones who are declared as 'normal learners', who display no visible disorders. This challenges policymakers because they need to revise the teacher-learner ratio, as children with learning difficulties need more than one teacher in class to be fully included in their education. The SIAS Policy aligns well with the SETT theoretical framework by Zabala (1995), which calls for the detailed collection of data about the individual

learner for that particular child or learner to be given relevant and required support.

Sharing similar views is teacher participant 5 in the qualitative study by Nzuza (2023, p. 119), who indicated:

'Learners experiencing barriers to learning learn at a different pace and understand things differently than the other learners. Some learn by texture, and others enjoy creativity. Therefore, as a teacher, you must be flexible when implementing IE. For example, I know these learners enjoy creativity, such as drama and playing. I will make something fun for them or act out the scenario as if they are watching a movie. I would do this act or demonstration, and they would feel like, oh, it is okay; this is what you meant, rather than writing on the board where they cannot relate to a real-life situation. The happiness of these learners when they understand the concept is impressive. I notice this works for these learners because when you relate, they do not want things to be written but relative to real-life situations to comprehend.'

Teacher participant 3 in the study by Nzuza (2023, p. 120) echoed these utterances and indicated:

'I use songs to explain the concept for those subjects that allow me to create fun or play for learners to understand. Every day, I use toys and Legos as I teach maths to show them, especially when dealing with space and shapes, depending on what section you are teaching. I feel confident as I teach when using these constructs to explain the concept to learners experiencing barriers to learning. Again, it is boring to learn through chalkboards and exercise books, writing, teachers' time talking, learners, you know, have to do writing, etc. Sometimes, they need more time to listen and play; maybe they can prove what they did in their exercise books. I use colourful charts in other subjects, and I will explain instructions very slowly for learners experiencing barriers to learning; therefore, as they see, they can understand the concept clearly.'

The participants value the implementation of IE using teacher creativity, flexibility and the latest technologies. Another teacher participant refuted this finding that bringing learners with varying abilities into one class is tantamount to committing injustice. Teacher participant 4, in the study by Nyawo (2023, p. 71), used the hospital wards to clarify his statement, as he indicated:

'Look, the hospitals have separated patients according to their categories [...] will you say it is discrimination? No, I don't see it this way. It is a matter of reasoning why you would do such a thing. Learners are our 'patients'; we must care for their cognitive development. IE is a failed system that does not address real issues. As a teacher, I need to assess my learners according to their levels to take them to the next level, but different learners' levels are mixed in one class, yet we give them the same assessment that is one level.'

Similarly, teacher participant 1, in the study by Nyawo (2023, p. 71) indicated:

'Our department is failing those learners that are challenged. Nothing has been done except to say: "Progress those learners," citing age cohort. How is it going to help that learner in the next grade? We have a long way to go if the grassroots level is not involved in the curriculum. They want everybody on the same level,

meaning the lower level. They don't want to give others a certain chance to reach a new, high level. Instead, they suppress those to a lower level. We will never win.'

The teacher participants highlight the need for all the stakeholders to join hands in ensuring collaboration to make quality IE implementation a reality. In the same breath, scholars in IE raise concerns about IE implementation by teachers as agents of change. For instance, Titus et al. (2020) and Nyawo (2023) argue that how IE is adopted and used has become a burning issue among the teaching cohort and that they feel defeated as the implementers of the IE Policy. As the findings reveal, defeatism is obvious during IE implementation in that learners on both ends of the spectrum are not benefiting in the process: Those who face challenges and those who are high flyers. While teachers are busy assisting those struggling learners, the high achievers finish their work quickly and start disrupting the whole class (Titus et al. 2020). This implies that neither group is being thoroughly assisted, with the struggling learners not progressing. At the same time, the top achievers are being lowered to accommodate everybody in class because of the demands associated with inclusivity. The above findings are in line with Nzuza's (2023) qualitative study, which conceded that EWP 6 on IE is more biased to inclusion where socio-economic background, culture and sexual orientation of learners are taken into account but excludes those learners with barriers to learning as they are still marginalised in the mainstream classroom set-up, because the status quo remains – that of continuing to offer the inflexible curriculum to all learners.

■ The lack of political will

The country is currently fighting a losing battle in implementing the IE policy, and there seems to be no accountability levelled against those who do not comply with the policy. This notion is corroborated by the findings in the EELC (2015) report, which confirms that the state has failed to convert ordinary schools into fully integrated full-service schools. This begs the question of how teachers can be in a position to implement IE when the state is not facilitating the process. Education will continue to be exclusionary as long as there is a lack of political will to build schools that will withstand inclement weather conditions and be well-resourced, such that they can provide lessons even during wars and natural disasters. This is highlighted by a qualitative study by Nyawo (2023), which revealed that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the stark challenges faced by children who live in remote rural settings. This was further exacerbated by the need to access online lessons when the country faced a hard lockdown. This implies that remote rural areas do not have adequate

infrastructure to enable rural learners to become part of online learning and are excluded from the process, making IE implementation a pipedream. This finding starkly contrasts with the aspirations of the EWP 6 of 2001, which clearly stated that every child can learn because such a child is given the required and adequate support. This finding corroborates the study by Engelbrecht (2020), which affirms that teachers are entirely behind the implementation of IE in their teaching pedagogies but are faced with the challenge of accessing relevant and required infrastructure to make such activity a resounding success. On the other hand, teachers working in overcrowded classes that lack educational technologies end up using the one-size-fits-all pedagogies because of pressure, thereby failing to differentiate their teaching to the satisfaction of every learner in attendance. This is further highlighted in a qualitative study by Nyawo (2023), where the challenge posed by overcrowding in schools is highlighted as one of the contributors to the dismal failure of some teachers to implement quality IE in their teaching.

■ **Failure to implement the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Policy**

There is a growing concern that a gap exists between policy and practice regarding IE implementation. For instance, the findings by the EELC (2015) report conceded that the department's intentions in putting IE and SIAS policies to light were perfect and promising. Still, their implementation leaves much to be desired regarding the efforts to train the policy implementers.

Teacher participant 2, in a study by Nyawo (2023, p. 80) explained:

'I have a bachelor's degree in teaching, including psychology in education. Workshops are conducted twice a year for policies that [...] have improved my skills to the highest level. These workshops are Just-in-Time (JIT) training for methodology (facilitator), winter classes (facilitator), SADTU training, Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) training, second-chance classes. Besides, a well-planned workshop has never been to assist us with inclusive education. The workshops mentioned above taught us content knowledge, not applications.'

Teacher participant 2, in a study by Nyawo (2023, p. 81) indicated:

'A SIAS workshop was organised by the district, equipping one teacher per school. This workshop focused on screening, identification, assessment, and support. The information we got from that workshop was not enough. We were given the SIAS document and were told [to] fill in Support Needs Form 1 (SNA 1) and Support Needs Form 2 (SNA 2) to identify learners with challenges. After those forms are filled [out], we must submit them to the district office to apply for concessions. When trying to implement what we have learnt, we found that there are documents to fill.'

In a qualitative study conducted by Nzuza (2023, p. 145), teacher participant 2, indicated:

'The learning programme is intense and contains a lot of content, and as teachers, we leave some sections to learners to learn on their own. Hence, as a teacher, I implement IE as I feel it. At the same time, as a teacher, you feel pressured; you wish to take all your learners through all content, but there is no room to manoeuvre for proper implementation of IE to accommodate the range of different learning needs. Moreover, I cannot design individual instruction for diverse learning and cater to different language barriers. I feel that the government-designed learning programme did not consider the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning. There is a distance between the learning programme and the learners experiencing barriers to learning, resulting in the ineffective implementation of IE. When I reflect on what learners experiencing barriers to learning go through, I feel hopeless, like I am not doing enough in the classroom to help them.'

In the same breath, teacher participant 3 in Nzuza (2023, p. 146) indicated:

'The lesson topics are too complex and huge for learners experiencing barriers to learning, and it does not show inclusivity. Trying to implement IE in a curriculum where you have to move fast since there is so much to unpack for the whole class at the same time and assess after that makes me not accommodating learners experiencing barriers to learning. At the same time, the policy expects us to conduct an assessment in writing, while learners experiencing barriers to learning struggle to write legibly, thus leading me not to assess inclusivity, which means IE is not done correctly. I implement IE in this way because I do not possess teaching methods to present content to learners experiencing barriers to learning how to deal with natural or practical strategies that can meet the quality implementation of IE. Therefore, it is difficult to say you are confident that inclusive education has been implemented and ensure that learners experiencing barriers to learning have comprehended the content. Thus, there is no accommodation provided within the policy for learners experiencing barriers to learning who work at their own pace and struggle. Again, an oral assessment is not provided in the curriculum policy; hence, I continue with those learners who can write. It is tough when you are teaching and knowing very well that your learners, especially those with barriers to learning, did not grasp the content; such does not bring joy to yourself.'

These utterances indicate the limited training educators are exposed to before they go to class to deal with the myriad of challenges learners with difficulties face. Such findings corroborate with the literature, which indicates that the state has made good strides in crafting world-class policies on IE but has failed dismally to implement such policies (EELC 2015). This finding refutes the SETT theory by Zabala (1995), which calls for detailed data collection by stakeholders to equip them with the required information to craft programmes that will adequately address the needs of the LWDs. Furthermore, stakeholders must examine the individual learners' source of problems or underlying issues as contributors to their unbecoming behaviour. For instance, are there any programmes for children who come

from war-torn areas? Is any specialised assessment meant for them, or is the blanket approach used during the summative assessment?

The research findings revealed that IE can be better implemented using the following mechanisms:

- Adequate training of stakeholders on IE
- Using technologically enhanced teaching
- Differentiating the curriculum
- Ensuring the implementation of the SIAS Policy.

The research findings revealed teachers' challenges when teaching children with varying learning difficulties under one roof. This is affirmed by teacher participant 2 in the qualitative study by Nyawo (2023, p. 80), who indicated:

'We have been discussing holistic and inclusive education to assist learners, but it's not working. How do you assist learners who struggle while not neglecting those who do not while they are in one class? We must group them according to their level in each class to give full attention to those struggling and enrich those gifted. I end up having to deal with learners with behavioural problems in my class. While I focus on struggling learners, the gifted ones feel left out. I do not think that I am skilled enough to implement IE fully.'

Teacher participant 1 in Nyawo (2023, p. 80) further indicated:

'No training has been given to us in our school. In fact, [little] has been said about inclusive education. When we admit learners, we allow all learners despite their capabilities; and when we teach, we presume that they are applying inclusivity in our classes.'

Teacher participant 1 in the qualitative study by Nzuza (2023, p. 140) had this to say:

'My experiences teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning are that they usually struggle in the classroom. They end up being violent, being bullies, bunking classes and being absent from school because of being scared of being unable to do much in class. In contrast, others work and finish their schoolwork. When this happens, they will bunk the lesson next time or not return to class after break time and indulge in smoking weed/dagga, cigarettes and gambling. When you ask them why they are not doing your schoolwork, they will respond violently, saying, "Leave me alone." Or they will say, "I do not have a pen" most of the time. Other learners will say, "Madam, even yesterday, he was like this." When you ask them something about the schoolwork, they will bunk the lesson next time or not return to class after break. Eventually, some learners experiencing barriers to learning end up dropping out of school, and you see them roaming the streets.'

One of the parent participants in Nzuza's (2023, p. 141) qualitative study had the following to say:

'Last year, I was often called to school for my child for not attending lessons. I am unsure whether this year is because of the older boys he stays with. I am always called for disciplinary hearings where he has been involved in fights or

been found smoking outside the school. I cannot count how many times I have been to South African National Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation (SANCA) trying to get him to help, but nothing seems to be working. I am now getting tired because I have to ask to go to these places [to help a] 15-year-old smoking dagga [marijuana]. I am unsure what to do now.'

These utterances indicate the dilemma teachers face in their line of duty. They further highlight their frustrations as they are required to support LWLDs and are also found wanting to do so in terms of having the needed pedagogies.

The research findings by Nyawo (2023) reveal that teacher training is key to the effective implementation of IE. Nyawo (2023) further argues that CWDs' welfare largely depends on the competencies and skills their teachers possess. Therefore, every country interested in CWDs must recruit and select quality and competent teachers to implement quality IE in every school. This will then go a long way in ensuring that such young people get grooming and relevant development on time and have a meaningful societal role. Similarly, Aldehami (2022) argues that teachers who lack the skills to implement IE contribute to the failure to implement IE effectively. In the same breath, Nyawo (2023) asserts that most serving teachers were never exposed to IE integration strategies during their teacher training and in-service years. This makes it challenging for such teachers to implement IE when they wholly lack the skills and expertise. The main contributors to this dilemma are teacher training institutions that have not equipped teachers with the skills to handle and assist children from various backgrounds. Furthermore, teachers' plight highlights the state's lack of political will to level the playing fields in all schools regarding providing adequate resources, be they material, physical or human. This will strengthen and bring hope to teachers so that they will see the need to take IE education seriously.

Furthermore, there is a growing belief among scholars that IE, if given the desired attention, can be successfully implemented. For instance, the study by Schuelka (2018) and Aldehami (2022) attests to such claims.

■ Adequate training of stakeholders on inclusive education

Schuelka (2018) and Aldehami (2022) assert that if teachers, parents and education officials are provided and trained in terms of the IE implementation toolkit, quality inclusive education (QIE) can be achieved. This finding aligns well with the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996*, Section 29, ss. 1, par. a, which asserts that the door of learning shall be opened to all. For this to be realised, refer to Table 3.1 for a guide that includes a 17-point indicator (Schuelka 2018, p. 6).

TABLE 3.1: Indicators for inclusive education development.

No.	Indicator	No.	Indicator
1.	Every learner is accommodated in the school	10.	Students show interest in the lessons presented to them
2.	Every learner gets support from fellow learners in their learning processes	11.	Students show full engagement in their learning activities
3.	The school staff provide support to all learners	12.	All students progress in all their subjects at their own pace
4.	A strong co-operation between parents and teachers exists	13.	Students continuously work as a team
5.	The school members value and support all learners in the same manner	14.	Quality health care services are provided to every learner in the school
6.	Learners' views and opinions are valued and their voices are not silenced	15.	Schools ensure that no learner is excluded from attending the school
7.	No learners are excluded from any lesson	16.	Required and relevant support is given to all learners, including those with learning difficulties, to succeed in their learning
8.	Every school building is accessible to all learners, irrespective of their abilities	17.	Schools ensure that a conducive learning environment is created to guarantee the progress of every learner in the school
9.	Learners attend school without fail	-	

Source: Adapted by the authors from MJ Schuelka (2018, p. 6).

Table 3.1 highlights the importance of creating an inclusive schooling environment that is invaluable and key to effectively implementing IE education.

Similarly, Baidya and Baidya (2024) highlight the importance of capacitating stakeholders to understand the student-centric approach. Schuelka (2018) highlights the importance of the common understanding of the concept of 'successful inclusive education', and he conceptualises IE by addressing the following dimensions, as can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 highlights the urgency of ensuring buy-in and a shared understanding of the IE concept in its true sense, as that would mean its effective implementation and the support of LWLDs.

■ Using technologically enhanced teaching

There is a growing belief among scholars that our current challenges call for a paradigm shift in the way educational modalities are available to learners. For instance, in the study by Fernández-Batanero et al. (2022), it is indicated that if schools are located in areas with wars and natural disasters, the displacement of teachers and the recruitment of learners into wars are guaranteed. This implies that teaching and learning must continue even under such conditions to ensure that IE is being implemented. To avoid the issue of stress and depression that the teachers and learners, as the victims

TABLE 3.2: Essential dimensions for ensuring quality inclusive education implementation.

Item	Indicator
Concepts	1.1. Policies, plans and practices are informed and guided by IE and equity as fundamental principles 1.2. The national curriculum and related assessment systems are tailor-made to suit the learner's needs 1.3. Stakeholders involved in educational matters involving learners and their families are clued up in terms of supporting national policies that are biased towards IE and equity in the educational landscape 1.4. Stakeholders utilise effective systems to monitor the availability, participation, and achievements of every learner in the educational landscape
Policy	2.1. All the key national education policy documentation fully supports educational inclusion and equity 2.2. All stakeholders, from national to school levels, are in full support and provide leadership on issues affecting inclusion and equity in education 2.3. Educational officials at all levels provide clear policies to help and guide IE and equity education initiatives
Structures and systems	3.1. Learners at risk receive support from all stakeholders 3.2. All stakeholders work as a team to present coordinated practices that are key to producing quality, inclusive and equitable education 3.3. The distribution of material resources and human capital is biased towards LWLDs 3.4. Inclusive and equitable education is provided using the allocation earmarked for special schools and related units
Practices	4.1. All schools and learning centres have buy-in from local communities in terms of supporting the strategies used to ensure that all learners participate and achieve the expected results from their learning experiences 4.2. All schools and interested organisations rally behind the LWLDs who run a risk of underachievement, marginalisation and exclusion 4.3. Teachers and support staff are willing and ready to accommodate learners' unique talents during their induction 4.4. Teachers and the support staff are allowed to participate in lifelong learning in terms of IE and equitable education

Source: Adapted by the authors from UNESCO (2017, pp. 17–36).

Key: IE, inclusive education; LWLDs, learners with learning difficulties.

of war, may face, the need to use technology-enhanced learning becomes the only option. This then happens in a country where the technology infrastructure is adequately installed in almost every part of the country. This is because some learners in areas with poor technology infrastructure will be excluded if this does not happen. The study by Muthanna et al. (2022) warns against teachers' over-reliance on technology for distance and online tuition, as it deprives learners of the chance to interact with one another to hone their social skills physically. The need to level the playing fields in terms of technology infrastructure provision is highlighted in Nyawo's (2023) and Nzuza's (2023) studies, which indicated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, learners from under-resourced schools were excluded from online learning platforms, while their counterparts in the well-resourced schools benefitted from the digital learning. For instance, a qualitative study by Nyawo (2023, p. 70) revealed that technology-enhanced learning paves the way for IE

implementation. For example, one male teacher participant 2 in Nyawo (2023, p. 68) valued the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in his teaching as he argued that it exposes learners to a variety of teaching platforms and promotes learner-centred teaching pedagogies, as he indicated:

‘When I’m done with the ATP, I usually bring audio tapes in class for learners to listen to and ask questions if there are any. I also use a data projector to let them watch extra video lessons and do activities on their own. Slides also play a significant role in revision, where learners can remind themselves of what was taught. I also organise educational outings for them to observe what we are learning about in class because some learners gain more insight when they see and attest to what is being taught.’

Teacher participant 2 in Nyawo (2023, p. 68) had the following to say:

‘I allow my learners to bring cell phones to class and send the activities via our WhatsApp group. This has assisted a lot, especially while the country was still in lockdown. I would post video lessons for them to watch, ask questions, do activities, write, and take class tests. Even though they were not at school, we proceeded with our year’s programme. Even struggling learners who are too shy to ask questions in class can ask them privately on the teachers’ WhatsApp. In that case, I can reteach and explain everything to them, and they feel a part of the class community.’

This finding highlights the possibility that IE education can be achieved using technologically enhanced learning pedagogies, on condition that technology infrastructure is installed in every school or community.

■ Differentiating the curriculum

The research findings also revealed that the curriculum’s lack of differentiation made it unfair to those struggling learners because slower learners were only accommodated in a small percentage of the examination paper. This concern was raised by teacher participant 2 in a qualitative study by Nyawo (2023, p. 91), who indicated:

‘There are topics that are regarded as difficult for slow learners. These topics will be taught throughout the year, but educators’ subject advisors know that slow learners won’t pass those topics. The term for the topics to be taught to the struggling learners is “low-hanging fruit”. This term is used when drilling learners to pass, where we would be asked to emphasise [...] “low-hanging fruits” when teaching that group of learners. It appears unfair to those learners, as it looks like 100 per cent of the curriculum is for [a] certain group of learners. The other group has to depend on only 30 per cent of the so-called “low-hanging fruits”’.

From the utterance, it is evident that an undifferentiated curriculum makes life difficult for both teachers and learners, as it does not cater for learners’ different abilities, which then calls for an urgent need for

schools to differentiate their curriculum. To address the DBE top-down instruction, where each subject filters down from authorities to teachers and learners, learners must have a voice on what they need to be taught. As teacher participant 2 noted in Nyawo (2023, p. 91), a qualitative study:

‘Some topics we know very well are complex for slow learners, but [*they*] insist that all learners must be taught during the year. Still, when we are approaching final examinations, officials will even tell teachers to avoid revising the topics [*with*] slow learners because they know that they are not capable (T2S2).’

The utterances made by this participant indicate that the curriculum designers follow a blanket approach in designing the curriculum packages without streamlining the content meant for different categories of learners. This makes it difficult for an educator sitting in an overcrowded classroom who must also plan and prepare for learners with varying abilities. The above findings align well with Nyawo (2023), who indicated that the Chinese government promote curriculum differentiation by using mantras such as ‘You jiao wu lei’ – meaning that teachers need to teach without classifying their learners, while at the same time promoting ‘Yin cai shi jiao’, which entails looking at the students’ aptitude first before lessons are designed to meet the learner unique needs.

■ Ensuring the implementation of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Policy

The qualitative study by Nyawo (2023, p. 93) highlights the urgent need to implement and closely monitor the SIAS Policy, starting from the lower grades upwards. This is indicated by teacher participant 1, who admitted:

‘We as teachers lack skills of [*im*]parting knowledge and dealing with the inclusive classroom. The main reason for learners to be at school is to be taught; the main duty is curriculum delivery. We know what to teach in class; we are the masters and experts in our subjects, but the challenge is how you deliver that to [*a*] child who can’t write and read at a secondary school level.’

As this comment shows, teachers at the higher levels are faced with learners who were supposed to get relevant support in their foundation phase. Still, learners with knowledge gaps were promoted because of ineffective SIAS Policy implementation and monitoring. This then compounds the problems for teachers who are required to provide further skills to learners, only to find that the basic ones are lacking. This finding aligns well with Sakiz et al. (2020), who assert that for IE to be fully implemented, there is an urgent need not to trample upon the rights of minorities in whatever form, be it culturally, ethnically or in academic terms. This would, therefore, mean that adequate screening and identification would have been carried out

timeously to inform the decisions and ensure that relevant assessment and support are provided to LWLDs. Furthermore, teachers will have relevant platforms to introduce learner-centred pedagogies instead of teacher-centred ones that prove to be exclusionary and are prone to leaving learners needing support behind.

For IE to be fully implemented, all stakeholders must join hands in learning to live and accept CWDs as unique individuals with unique needs and talents instead of discriminating against them. Additionally, as long as some teachers discriminate against CWDs by labeling them as slow learners, significant work is needed before education can be considered inclusive and equitable IE. Furthermore, the terminology that is used to refer to LWLDs is discriminatory when they are called CWDs, as this categorisation only touches on the medical aspect of the learner, leaving out issues such as depression caused by the loss of parents, as well as anger resulting from being raised by abusive parents.

■ Contribution to knowledge

The lack of shared understanding of IE among serving teachers serves as a clarion call for curriculum planners to ensure that serving teachers attend IE workshops to be relevant to the 21st-century learner. In the same breath, the HEIs need to factor in an integrated online module on IE for all the serving teachers. In addition, subject specialists need to be equipped to support schools practically. For instance, they must be trained to screen learners and be able to issue concessions to those with learning difficulties. There needs to be a shift in paradigm in terms of refraining from labelling learners who are challenged as CWDs but categorising them as LWLDs. Furthermore, it highlights the need to elevate IE to be the priority of every community member to prepare for natural disasters and times of war.

This chapter highlights the fact that IE in South Africa is still a contemporary issue in the educational landscape, in the sense that although many policies have been crafted, their implementation is still faced with a myriad of challenges, such as inadequate teacher training on IE and the misconception of the concept IE by various stakeholders, including educators as the implementers of the policy. The most burning issue is the notion that the majority of the participants localise IE into learning barriers and socio-economic definition, leaving out the issue of learners who are excluded based on their religion, language, wars, civil unrest and the outbreak of natural disasters, including the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the natural disasters associated with climate change.

This chapter explores the advancements in IE by focusing on the perspectives and experiences of LWLDs, who are often victims of IE exclusion. This exclusion can lead to negative behaviour, such as bullying and dropping out of school, stemming from frustration and a lack of support from teachers. Additionally, the chapter broadens the understanding of IE, moving beyond the medical-deficit model that defines learners with barriers to education. It also acknowledges those who are deprived of quality education because of factors such as religion, war, civil unrest, language and natural disasters.

Furthermore, the findings are silent in terms of how the participants in sampled schools respond to challenges facing teachers in war-torn areas and learners who are discriminated against in terms of their religion, race and the languages that they speak. The findings did not address the issue of how teachers get capacitated to handle the problems of LWLDs based on the challenges when they find themselves missing out on education because of natural disasters threatening their lives and educational opportunities. This chapter aims to close the gap in terms of how the South African government distributes its resources in terms of levelling the playing fields on religion, race, language and issues of violence, as well as listening to the voices of teachers and learners whose day-to-day activities are affected by issues of IE. Furthermore, this chapter draws the attention of stakeholders to the realisation that IE should not be treated as a policy. Still, it needs to graduate into law to hold the administrators into account in case the rights of learners are infringed upon. In addition to that, as long as the government of South Africa fails to come up with a comprehensive definition of the concept of IE, and as long as they fail to address all the aspects of IE, this contemporary issue will always be an inclusion of some and the exclusion of many learners in the country, resulting to high learner dropouts and high levels of unbecoming behaviour of learners which has a potential to breed unruly adults who will be a danger to society in the future, thereby putting a dent on the principles of democracy and the aspiration of QIE for all.

■ Recommendations

Giving inclusivity the apex priority is critical in preparing inclusive communities. Here are some strategies that South Africa can implement to succeed in the area of IE.

Teacher-pupil ratio: The state needs to change teacher allocations such that an educator is allocated ten learners for adequate and practical support. This implies that, as things stand in South Africa, each educator at the primary school level is assigned to 40 learners. In comparison, at the

secondary school level, there are 30 learners each educator has to support. If all schools are inclusive, it will mean that teachers' work will be doubled when learners with Down syndrome, the ones with dyscalculia, with dyslexia and those who are hyperactive are placed under one roof. The need to review the teacher-pupil ratio will then be vital in ensuring that IE is effectively implemented.

Classify inclusive education as one of the essential services: Categorising IE under essential services will ensure that more allocation of resources will be biased towards IE so that quality EFA learners, irrespective of their abilities, is realised. Furthermore, the state must put in place emergency and evacuation plans to ensure quality IE, even during times of war and natural disasters, meaning that even the army and the health personnel must be equipped with skills to support LWLDs.

Exposing both the pre-service and serving teachers to practical IE training with incentives: This will entice them to see the need to support the LWLDs, thereby fulfilling the goals and aspirations of the state, as there will be no child left behind in terms of ensuring accessibility to education.

Transform every South African school into an integrated full-service school: Schools classified as full-service schools are required by law to have adequate infrastructure and all the facilities to make the schooling environment inclusive to all learners. Furthermore, it will help in changing the mindset of stakeholders, including future employers of LWLDs, encouraging them to view these individuals as potential employees.

Encourage parents to partner with schools: Parents have ways of treating their children with learning difficulties, and such needs to be shared with teachers on relevant platforms, including meetings and other digital platforms to which schools expose their stakeholders. This will enable them to support schools and also access support systems available for their children in schools and other government services.

Capacitate stakeholders regarding the broader version of the IE concept: Stakeholders need to be capacitated on the broader idea of IE. This will help in ensuring that issues of language, religion and other social aspects are considered within the IE concept over and above the medical aspect of the idea, which is commonly known by most stakeholders.

Level the playing fields in terms of providing digital technologies to every school: For schools to be fully inclusive, their digital infrastructure needs to be upgraded to such an extent that there is no digital divide, which will make it difficult for teachers and learners to implement IE in their schools fully.

Graduate the IE policy into law: For IE to be effectively implemented and the resource provisioning by the administrators, the issue of converting the SIAS Policy must be considered to ensure that the state is obliged to allocate funds to help facilitate the implementation of this policy.

Allocate equal weighting to all languages: For meaningful IE implementation, the LoLT should not be biased towards a particular racial group. This is because the key is knowledge and not fluency in a specific language, which means excluding those who are not good at that language during teaching, learning and assessment. This would mean the total inclusion of socially and otherwise learners in their learning experiences. Therefore, languages must be given the exact weighting during the assessment of learners instead of setting exams in languages foreign to learners.

Allocate a psychologist to every circuit: For learners to access relevant and required support, every circuit office has to be allocated a psychologist. This will ensure that LWLDs are provided with the required support and documentation that is needed for quick and timely approval of their concessions.

Monitor the implementation of the SIAS Policy: For LWLDs to access required support, all stakeholders need to join hands in ensuring effective screening, assessment and support by every educator. Additionally, Support Needs Form 1 (SNA 1) and Support Needs Form 2 (SNA 2) should be filled out and submitted to the SBST and CBST, and tracked by the school management team (SMT).

■ Conclusion

The policies on inclusion represent important steps in the right direction; however, their implementation requires all stakeholders to reevaluate how to support teachers and parents, including district officials, in assisting learners who are displaced during natural disasters and who may lose loved ones in the process, while still performing exceptionally well academically. If South Africa aims to succeed in IE, it must allocate substantial resources to this effort. Inclusive education goes beyond addressing the challenges faced by LWDs; it encompasses creating an inclusive environment in both schools and communities, where no adult is labelled as having a disability. For this reason, IE must be prioritised to eliminate the stigmatisation and marginalisation of learners with unique needs and challenges within the education system. Based on the main findings reported here, the following actions need to be taken:

1. Expose both pre-service and current teachers to practical IE training.

2. Transform every school in South Africa into an integrated full-service school.
3. Encourage parents to collaborate with schools to facilitate easier access to available support systems for their children.
4. Allocate a psychologist to each circuit office for quick approval of learner concessions.
5. Ensure that effective screening, identification, assessment and support are conducted by every educator, with SNA 1 and SNA 2 forms filled out and monitored by the SMTs.

Information and communication technologies in the curriculum: Focusing on Geography education

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■ Abstract

This chapter examines the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) across the curriculum, with a particular focus on teaching Geography. It utilises interviews, observations and document reviews as data collection tools. The chapter is supported by the technological pedagogical and content knowledge substitution, augmentation, modification and redefinition model, which has proven to be a reliable framework for measuring the integration of ICTs across the curriculum. A qualitative approach was employed to gather the lived experiences of participants, including both

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learners and teachers. The purposive sampling technique was used to identify relevant participants. This chapter emphasises the importance of information and communication technology (ICT) integration in education, which is essential for equipping learners with the 21st-century ICT skills necessary for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR), as well as for the job market and digital citizenship. The findings revealed that ICT integration in education enhances learners' understanding of challenging concepts through virtual reality, while also improving their communication and research skills, and promoting self-paced learning.

The findings revealed that through ICT integration, teachers can develop learners who are information seekers, critical thinkers and lifelong, inquiry-based learners. These students become resilient and adaptable in an ever-changing world characterised by complexities and uncertainties. By preparing for real-life challenges early on, learners gain a competitive advantage. They achieve this by utilising ICT tools such as YouTube, music, video games, songs, ChatGPT, the Siyavula App, Google Earth and Google Maps. These resources empower learners to generate knowledge while adopting human and environmentally friendly technologies to solve their problems. Consequently, teachers can implement learner-centred teaching using ICTs without compromising academic performance.

■ Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the hands of information and communication technology (ICT)-compliant educators can enhance the effectiveness of digital native teachers. The omnipresence of ICTs has prompted changes in every aspect of life, including education, and they are not intended to replace teachers. Instead, they are viewed as indispensable tools for teaching problem-based learning skills to learners. This perspective is supported by Šiljeg, Milanović and Marić (2022) and Sway and Mwila (2024), who assert that interactive geographic information system (GIS) tutors (GIS-T) can facilitate Geography mapwork instruction, making it more engaging and essential for deepening learners' understanding, particularly in applying theory to practice. Such tools tend to be handy as they can transcend the four walls and boundaries of the classroom. This implies that learners can access education irrespective of where they find themselves in their geographical locations. The technological pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK) substitution, augmentation, modification and redefinition (SAMR) compliant educators will have no difficulty in integrating ICT into their teaching. Urooj and Farooq (2023) and Gubevu and Mncube (2024) assert that ICTs can be ubiquitously used and that their integration into education is virtually unstoppable.

Similarly, Teidla-Kunitsõn, Sisask and Põlda (2023) report that ICT-mediated lessons could be presented in all aspects of geography, from physical to human geography. Mzuza and Van der Westhuizen (2023) assert that the process promotes self-learning, self-paced knowledge acquisition and self-assessment, self-directed learning and ultra-learning, thus equipping learners with cutting-edge 21st-century life and digital skills. Tarisayi (2022), Musumba (2019) and Sway and Mwila (2024) point out that seamless and visual digital technologies, such as animations, simulations and moving images, facilitate learners' understanding of challenging concepts. From there, communication skills improve as learners work in teams, access seamless virtual reality, make collective decisions, and take responsibility for their learning. Surprisingly, Abedi (2024) asserts that some teachers in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) era still adhere to traditional teacher-centred approaches, denying 21st-century learners the opportunity to acquire and develop their ICT skills. This lack of exposure to learner-centred teaching pedagogies can be detrimental, as these skills prove invaluable even beyond the schooling environment.

■ Literature review

■ Benefits of integrating information and communication technology across the curriculum

□ Distribution of resources in learning environments

A significant challenge currently facing teachers is the mandate to ensure all learners have equitable access to education. They must ensure that no learner is left behind, even when face-to-face instruction is highly difficult. For instance, Ramafi (2022) argues that ICTs enable teachers to design, upload and distribute learning materials in various settings, allowing them to reach learners regardless of their geographical locations. Conversely, Molotsi (2022) and Ramafi (2022) refute this finding by saying that schools are equipped with digital devices. Still, they are mainly used for administrative purposes by teachers and school management teams (SMTs), especially in rural Southern Africa. This then defeats the intention of disseminating learning materials to learners who may be advantaged by ICT-mediated lessons or be limited to homeschooling because of natural disasters, civil unrest or their state of health. This finding becomes a wake-up call to curriculum planners to ensure that both the serving and the pre-service teachers get capacitated with ICT skills to serve as facilitators rather than barriers to learning in the journey of the 21st-century schooling learner. Ramafi (2022) argues that ICTs enable learners to communicate better and learn from each other quickly, and this helps to close their content gaps. Lotheta (2022) asserts that ICTs shifted the labour of education from the school to home or individual settings during the outbreak

of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, when mass gatherings were banned. This shift necessitated online learning to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning. This indicates that the home became part of the school setting and played a significant role in helping learners realise their potential. Information and communication technologies, therefore, ensure that virtual classrooms tend to replace traditional classrooms, as the former allows learners to get taught by their teachers virtually in the comfort of their homes. This meant that routines at home had to undergo a significant shift, incorporating ICT-mediated learning programmes. As a result, less privileged households that lack essential ICT resources had to cease accessing education.

▣ Access to quality education for all

The international literature on accessing education is clear that the playing fields are not level in terms of providing access to quality education for all to guarantee a high retention rate of learners throughout the education system. For instance, Molotsi (2022) notes that there has been a downward trend in terms of the quality of matric results, compounded by the high drop-out rate among tertiary education students, citing that tertiary education is highly demanding and challenging. They further argue that ICTs have penetrated almost every aspect of life, including business, health and education. Therefore, for the state to ensure quality education for all, the integration of ICT in the teaching and learning environment is indispensable.

According to Alao and Brink (2022), ICTs are essential life skills; therefore, every learner must be equipped with these skills to thrive in their life journey. Teachers need to help learners use their digital devices, such as smartphones, productively by accessing information that can aid in solving daily life issues, rather than using these gadgets to visit undesirable online platforms that can hinder their academic success. This, therefore, implies that accessing information from online platforms without processing it does not qualify as ICT integration.

In a study by Lotheta (2022), the findings suggest that ICTs enable teachers and learners alike to access up-to-date and current information, as opposed to textbooks that may be uploaded with obsolete details by the time they are published. This implies that ICT-compliant educators may use videos on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to help their learners unpack challenging concepts and facilitate their understanding. This can be illustrated by a technologically proficient Physical Sciences educator, serving in a deep rural school without textbooks, trying to unpack the difference between elastic and inelastic collisions. Such an educator can use YouTube to download videos that will virtually display to learners how such collisions happen and differ. Interestingly, the YouTube videos are uploaded with images and sound, with an online tutor who will guide the

learners' every step. In this instance, the digital native educator has not only unpacked the concepts but managed to grab the attention of learners and helped them to change their mindset regarding the use of ICT devices from being communication tools to being their 'walking companions' – gadgets uploaded with subject-related material for the ease of reference by digitally compliant learners. In a study conducted by Abedi (2024), where ICTs were recommended in facilitating the teaching of the English language to Vietnamese non-English learners, Mahlo and Waghid (2023) and Abedi (2024) assert that ICTs are so flexible that they can assist teachers in equipping learners with skills in the complex and ever-changing information-rich environment. Information and communication technologies are, therefore, tools that assist ICT-compliant teachers in reaching out to every learner in class or even the one who cannot cope with the pace of their classmates when the latter can replay the online uploaded digital-mediated lessons in the comfort of their home. Lotheta (2022) affirms that ICT-mediated lessons potentially yield a higher retention rate than traditional pedagogies. This, therefore, means that ICT-integrated lessons are the future of education, with some countries allowing celebrities to present some content online to attract young people to online learning (Lotheta 2022).

Similarly, Nursyahrina et al. (2021) affirm that integrating ICTs ensures active learner participation in learning, unlike traditional teacher-centred pedagogies, while students are passive learners. This finding aligns well with the qualitative study by Gubevu (2022), who contended that learners tend to participate actively in ICT-mediated lessons. This highlights the need for teachers to integrate ICTs to improve learner participation in their classes effectively. This finding aligns well with Nyawo (2023), who asserts that learners with barriers to learning can have their academic scores improved on condition that they are provided with assistive devices to improve their hearing.

□ Information and communication technology integration promotes learner-centred teaching pedagogies

There is a growing concern about the high level of learners not showing interest in teacher-centred lesson presentations. There is hope that the ubiquitous nature of ICTs may help teachers win back the lost trust of their learners and make their lessons interactive, such that learner voices are heard, making it possible for them to hone their ICT skills required in both the job market and digital citizenry. The study by Lotheta (2022) asserts that ICT integration enables teachers to present learner-centred lessons easily. Similarly, Dewah and Sibanda's (2022) study claims that ICTs would allow learners to generate their knowledge using digital devices productively.

This happens when learners are presented with prompt questions by their mathematics teachers and are required to watch videos, analyse them and present their responses without relying on teacher-centred approaches. In this instance, the learner can use more than one sense to collect relevant data, analyse it and use their communication skills to compile responses that will be collated and submitted to the teacher. While ICTs are used, teachers may seize the opportunity to equip their learners with collaboration skills. They allow learners to work as a collective, confront issues and learn to realise that challenges become lighter when shared. This helps equip learners with skills to access real-time solutions using the ICT skills they acquired in class. Such initiatives keep learners interested in the learning process and improve their curiosity and academic performance as they get exposed to interactive learning. They can record and replay lessons to enhance their understanding of the state-of-the-art ICT-based effective education system (Lotheta 2022). This finding corroborates with the study by Gubevu (2022), which indicated that ICTs enable learners to use their digital devices to craft ‘walking companions’ – summaries of recorded content that can be played back until learners understand the content. This is far better than the traditional teacher-centred approach, where teachers’ presentations cannot be replayed.

Barriers to integrating information and communication technology across the curriculum

Lack of information and communication technology skills training programmes for teachers

Regarding the poor uptake of ICTs by most school teachers, there is an urgent need to look closely at the contributing factors to this challenge. This implies that, even if the state can provide ICT infrastructure in schools, that does not mean that there is a guarantee that ICT will be integrated with the teaching and learning processes. This notion is supported by Mahlo and Waghid (2023) and Abedi (2024), who argue that teachers will feel incapacitated enough to integrate ICT into their teaching without ICT training programmes. This denies them an opportunity to acquire life skills in integrating ICTs to benefit their learners. Therefore, their failure to integrate ICTs emanates from the absence of training programmes meant to upskill them in ICT integration across the curriculum. Teachers competent in ICT integration will find it easy to present ICT-mediated lessons to their learners (Teidla-Kunitsõn et al. 2023).

Lack of appropriate information and communication technology infrastructure

Sometimes, researchers examine how the lack of ICT infrastructure might impact teachers’ uptake of ICT integration in their teaching pedagogies.

Teachers are believed to be faced with ICT integration devices, software and infrastructure shortages (Abedi 2024). In a similar study by Paños-Castro, Arruti and Korres (2022), Deweh and Sibanda (2022) and Ramafi (2022), it is stated that the absence of ICT infrastructure at the homes of learners and in some schools for educators and their learners is one of the hindrances that make it difficult for teachers to integrate ICTs in the curriculum. In this manner, teachers are not encouraged to consider ICTs as a viable solution in facilitating their teaching experiences. This finding aligns well with the study by Lotheta (2022), who contended that low-income families cannot afford ICTs, thus could not assist their children in accessing online lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown periods. This same goes for teachers with no ICT devices, who had no other options and had to wait for face-to-face teaching programmes to continue before meeting with their learners. This automatically means that learners from impoverished communities had their education disrupted because of the lack of ICT infrastructure, thereby ensuring that the digital divide between the rich and the poor widens.

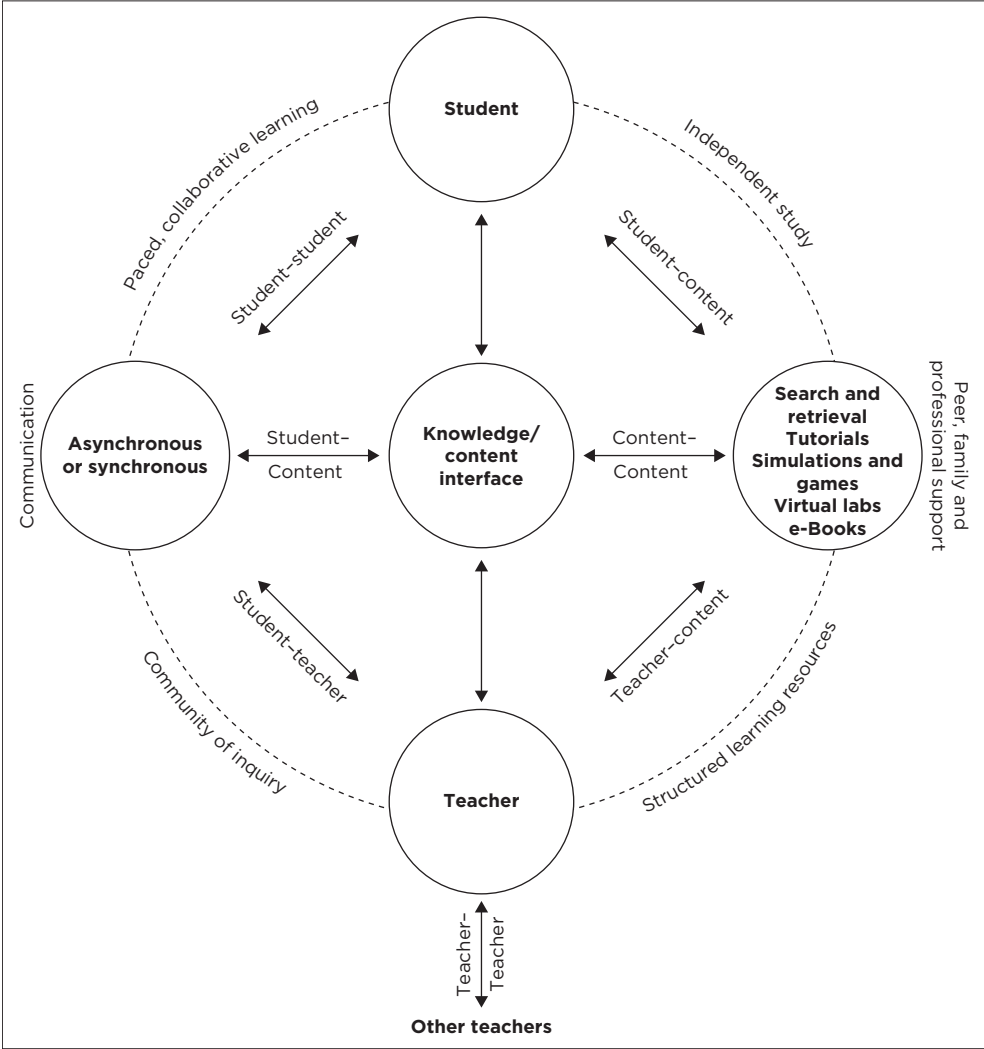
❑ Lack of time and materials for information and communication technology integration

Popular assumptions are that one of the contributing factors to poor uptake of ICT integration into teaching and learning is that teachers need to do thorough lesson preparation for ICT-mediated lessons compared to conventional lesson preparation. For instance, Letshwene and Du Plessis (2021) assert that teachers face the challenges of covering specific topics in the Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) within a particular period, as senior managers are keen on ensuring that a certain amount of content is covered on time. Teachers are also expected to prepare and design their ICT-mediated lessons before they attend class and present them to their learners. Similarly, Paños-Castro et al. (2022) further assert that preparing an ICT-mediated lesson takes longer than traditional methods. Teachers must surf the Internet, using their digital devices to capture and design additional learning material for an ICT-mediated lesson to be more attractive. It is more time-consuming than just grabbing a textbook and preparing lessons using the traditional approach. This deprives them of an opportunity to empower their learners with ICT skills and teach for assessment using conventional teaching methods (Paños-Castro et al. 2022).

❑ Lack of social interaction during online learning

There is a growing concern among scholars that presenting online lessons deprives teachers of opportunities to closely interact with their learners because they will be denied facial expressions and other non-verbal cues, for instance, in the qualitative study conducted by Mhishi, Chimbwanda

and Gwizangwe (2023), teachers indicated that when ICTs are integrated using the online platforms, they miss the interaction and the verbal communication they enjoy with their learners during the face-to-face teaching. This finding refutes the study by Antón-Sancho, Fernández-Arias and Vergara-Rodríguez (2023), a study which contended that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic saw an increase in ICT integration in the fields of engineering and health sciences, thereby closing the gap between male and female ICT integration uptake. Researchers conclude that teacher immediacy is key in facilitating the learning process. This is shown in Figure 4.1.



Source: Adapted by the authors from Noordan and Yunus (2022, pp. 2051–2069).
FIGURE 4.1: Online reading model.

■ **Strategies used to integrate information and communication technologies across the curriculum**

□ **Networking via professional learning communities**

Although significant efforts have been made to upskill serving and pre-service teachers to ensure that they form networks that will guarantee lifelong learning, there is a growing need to sharpen their ICT integration skills. This enhancement is essential to ensure their relevance to 21st-century learners, whose activities are centred around ICT. It has been believed by Nyamupangedengu et al. (2023), in their qualitative study, that ICTs enable teachers to form WhatsApp groups, which allow novice teachers to collaborate with seasoned teachers at school, provincially and at the national levels. This implies that integrating ICTs has proven to facilitate the formation of effective and functioning professional learning communities (PLCs). At this stage, novice teachers will share expertise quickly with their seasoned counterparts in the field, which would have taken them longer without online information-sharing platforms. The same goes with learners who can communicate with their teachers, using ICTs to their advantage, each time they face challenges in their teachers' absence. They can contact them via online platforms, allowing learners to have their challenges resolved instantly. This finding aligns with Gubevu's (2022) study, which indicated that ICTs enabled learners to stay in touch with their teachers, ensuring no learner is left behind in the learning process.

□ **Video games keep learners interested in learning**

In recent years, there has been a strong interest in using learning materials such as infographics and video games to facilitate the teaching of subjects such as Geography and English. It is believed that this approach helps learners to observe trends and use more senses during lesson presentations. Such an initiative is nearly impossible when teachers use hard-copy textbooks that are inflexible and do not have current information. Scholars, such as Lotheta (2022), concede that integrating ICTs using video games enables teachers to keep younger children focused for a more extended period. Learners are more engaged in their learning in the presence of ICTs and are easily distracted when taught using the traditional teaching mode.

Similarly, in the study by Nursyahrina et al. (2021), which examined the use of Google Classroom in the teaching of English, the findings contended that the 21st-century learner regards ICT integration as a life skill and that teachers who present their lessons without using digital technologies end

up boring their learners. Teachers in the 21st century need to consider that ICTs are part of the lives of 21st-century learners as digital citizens. Nursyahrina et al. (2021) argue that using Google Classroom enables teachers to upload assessments and other related activities while learners simultaneously use this platform to submit their tasks as expected. This finding indicates that ICTs are there to involve learners in their education and make learning interactive actively.

▣ Information and communication technologies promote homeschooling

One of the growing trends and approaches in the educational space is the introduction of homeschooling, which is nearly impossible to realise using traditional teaching approaches. For these reasons, teachers often rely on online platforms to entice their learners to focus on the learning process and improve learner engagement. For instance, Nursyahrina et al. (2021) posit that the use of Google Classroom by teachers enables them to expose their learners to online platforms, thereby equipping them with literacy and life skills required for survival in the 4IR and the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) era. Information and communication technology paves the way for learners to receive lessons irrespective of their physical location, including being taught in the comfort of their homes. Learning becomes individualised and meaningful as learners can interact with their teachers and progress at their own pace. Information and communication technologies enable teachers to make individual comments that help each learner's proper and customised development. This finding aligns well with Sumartini, Agustina and Adnyani's (2021) study, which asserted that when ICTs are integrated, learners can submit their assessment activities more efficiently and faster, even without having to leave their homes, thereby saving time and money as there will be no need to incur costs of printing tasks.

■ Theoretical framework

This chapter is buttressed by Drugova et al. (2021) TPACK-SAMR model. Drugova et al. (2021) integrate TPACK with SAMR by unpacking the TK, where TK (substitution) refers to teaching activities uploaded onto the online platform for listening and reading. Teachers assess them in terms of strengths and weaknesses (augmentation), where homework activities in the classroom are not prioritised. Learner-centred activities are given priority (redefinition), where teachers play the facilitating role. At the same time, learners are permitted to choose their own material and plan accordingly. They are regularly engaged in self-paced activities, and they are informed by feedback from the online platform.

Furthermore, they fuse:

[CK] (substitution), where analogous content is replaced by digital material either [wholly] or [partially;] CK (Augmentation), [where various] content [complements existing content,] and homework[’s] given and controlled by the teacher with assignments on the online platforms where teachers monitor learner progress, CK (Modification), [where] interactive ICTs are [relied upon] to provide learners with digital content [to initiate] the [improvement of the] learning experience, [CK (Redefinition)] and where [teachers and learners, become co-innovators in terms of generating digital content]. (Gubevu & Mncube 2024)

Drugova et al. (2021) recommend using online platforms to replace traditional homework, where online activities are used by teachers to digitally monitor learners while doing such activities and giving them real-time feedback. The TPACK-SAMR framework has a policy that entails the following:

- TK means personalised learning that touches on the learner’s performance throughout the year
- PK relates to the strategies used to incorporate online platforms into the learning processes
- CK touches on the critical digital tools deemed suitable for the learning environment
- Assessing learner competencies to assess the impact of exposure to a digital learning space
- Constantly monitoring teacher and learner progress, using learner academic records and teacher performance indicators
- Continuous technological and pedagogical support from ICT service providers.

■ Research objective

The general aim of the study is to assess the role of ICT integration across the curriculum, which is underpinned by the objective:

- To identify the value ICT integration brings across the curriculum.

■ Research question

What is the value of integrating ICTs across the curriculum?

■ Research methods

The researchers situated the current study within the interpretive paradigm, believing that reality can be understood at the participant’s level. The researchers further believe that facts cannot always be interpreted

objectively, as participants must be allowed to analyse and understand reality in their context. Here, the participants (teachers and learners), the researchers and the context in which ICT is applied should be interwoven instead of being treated in isolation. In this regard, the researchers employed the constructivist paradigm to allow participants to contribute meaningfully by ensuring:

[T]heir voices [are] heard. The constructivist approach is grounded [on] the fundamentals of qualitative research. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) assert that the [qualitative research approach] focuses on the voices and perceptions of the participants [regarding] how they [perceive] and interpret reality. (Gubevu & Mncube 2024)

The purposive sampling technique enabled participants to be custodians of the research study, as influenced by the fact that integrating ICT across the curriculum is critically important. It is through interviews, observations and document reviews that researchers have managed to collect data.

■ Research approach¹

For McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020), the qualitative approach allows the researcher to arrive at a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study – in this case, how teachers perceive technology and integrate ICTs in their lessons and what benefits they reap in the process across the curriculum in South African schools. As qualitative research accommodates and reflects the voices of the participants concerning how they perceive reality, this study employed the qualitative approach to garner the participants' views on the benefits they enjoyed in seeking to integrate ICTs into their teaching.

■ Research design

In this chapter, researchers employed a multiple-case study research design to gather data from the participants to arrive at an in-depth understanding of their experiences in their settings. Further, the multi-case study proved to be the ideal tool for obtaining answers to questions such as (in this instance) why and how the study participants integrated ICTs across the curriculum. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Adams et al. (2022) state

1. This section is based on the following published material: Gubevu, B & Mncube, V 2024, 'Chronicling participants' understanding and experiences of integrating ICT into the teaching of Geography in South African schools', *Perspectives in Education*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 192–205. <https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v42i2.7083>

that the research design pertains to the researcher's plans for collecting data, while a case study enables them to assess a system or an organisation.

■ Sample and sampling techniques

This study purposely sampled ($n = 15$) teachers from eight secondary schools, which integrated ICTs into their teaching while at the same time offering Geography as the teaching subject in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. Furthermore, the study purposely sampled ($n = 13$) Grade 12 learners who complemented their studies using ICTs. A total of ($n = 28$) participants, comprising Grade 12 learners and teachers, participated in this study. Importantly, Grade 12 learners and teachers were deemed relevant participants in this study as they are at the exit point of their secondary schooling career in South Africa. That would mean that they are bound to use every means possible to guarantee the production of quality results in that grade. At this level, stakeholders focus on the outcome and do not consider tracing the missing concepts along the school journey. Notably, the researchers employed purposive sampling to gather data because the study was qualitative and accommodated the researchers' use of individual semi-structured interviews to access the voices of the participants on how they experience the integration of ICTs across the curriculum, with specific reference to Geography teaching in the FET phase schools. Therefore, it was paramount to purposively sample participants interested in technology-based learning and teaching, as opposed to any other teacher, hence adopting the purposive sampling technique. The large data sets were organised into themes and thematically analysed (Perone & Saunders 2023). Table 4.1 shows the pseudonyms attached to participants.

■ Tools for collecting data

The researchers used observation, document review and semi-structured interviews to solicit information from participants on how ICTs are integrated across the curriculum, with a particular reference to Geography. Interviews were used as data collection methods, allowing interaction between the

TABLE 4.1: Pseudonyms representing the research participants.

Participants	Pseudonyms
Learner 1, Schools 1, 2, 3 and 4	Sanele, Sabelo, Samkelo and Sandisiwe
Learner 2, Schools 1, 2, 3 and 4	Takalani, Tumelo, Tankiso and Tsepho
Learner 3, Schools 1, 2, 3 and 4	Amanda, Ayanda, Andisiwe and Amkela
Learner 4, School 3	Zangwa
Teacher 1, Schools 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5	Tshiamo, Tshawe, Tsheduo, Tsia and Tseko
Teacher 2, Schools 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5	Madi, Madela, Mendu and Memela
Teacher 3, Schools 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5	Khuse, Khumalo, Khondlo and Khalipha

Source: Authors' own work.

interviewer and interviewee. Observations were also used to highlight the areas of excellence and the grey regions when teachers integrate ICTs across the curriculum. The other data collection method used in this article was document analysis, as it can indicate whether the document's contents align with the participants' practice:

Privacy: Confidentiality was observed in revealing information disclosed to the participants or institutions of learning.

Consent: The researchers ensured that they obtained participants' consent and the necessary permission letter from the education authorities.

Approval: Permission was sought from the provincial Department of Basic Education (DBE) in KwaZulu-Natal to conduct research at the research sites. The authors applied to the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was granted approval (grant ref. no. MNC071SGUB01).

■ Discussion of the findings

Relying on the respondents' voices for data collection is critical in research.

'For this reason, selections from the interview transcripts have been used to ensure that educators' voices are heard, both those who believe [ICT integration] leads to quality education and those who [think] there is no link between the two. This section presents the themes that emerged from the data analysis, which are [as] follows' (Mncube & Harber 2010):

1. Digital citizenship and ICTs
2. Promotion of a learner-centred approach through ICT integration
3. Reduction of teacher workload through ICT
4. Improved learner achievements through ICT
5. Promotion of self-paced learning through ICT
6. Preparation of learners for tertiary education and for the job market through ICTs.

■ Digital citizenship and information and communication technologies

Reza, Chao and Kim (2024) assert that various digital devices grant learners access to their teachers through blogs, Facebook posts and SMSes sent via mobile phones, regardless of the location of either party or the time of day. This finding corroborates Rizk and Hillier's (2022) studies that a learner who relies on a textbook that is prescribed at school and the subject teacher as the only sources of information will lose out in that there is a myriad of resources and experts that are available online to help them enrich their knowledge and skills. The study by Prasastiningtyas, Kurniawan and Ruswandi (2024) and Kallon (2024) corroborates this finding in that

self-motivated teachers who use ICT find no difficulty integrating it into their teaching. Lim and Toh (2024) argue that incorporating ICT into language teaching and learning is essential for improving reading and writing skills. This highlights the need for learners to transition from print to digital textbooks. Findings reveal that 27% of South African learners who have already spent six years in the education system cannot read and write. At the same time, their Malaysian counterparts improved their reading skills after the introduction of the smart-school initiative. Sharma (2024) opined that ICT had become a life skill and that denying learners access shuts down the opportunity to become a self-reliant learner who is innovative and relevant in the global market. Thus, even a struggling learner can be engaged in the learning process, which makes the teaching environment more conducive to teaching and learning, with no learner being left behind. The findings are supported by a 38-year-old male educator, participant 3 (Khondlo), who affirmed:

‘Online learning digital learning material is readily available thanks to technology, allowing students to work in groups on various tasks and assignments. These tools allow learners to collaborate regardless of where they are physically by facilitating the sharing of learning material and engaging in virtual conversations. A more engaging and customised learning environment can be created by distributing and working on activities with other learners.’

A 32-year-old female educator, participant 1 (Tshiamo), had the following to say:

‘Everybody in this 4IR era should embrace technology because it makes life easier, such as cell phones and computers, enabling us to submit work more efficiently. I am also in a position to form WhatsApp groups with parents of learners to ensure that their children make timely submissions and get monitored as they do their homework. Through ICT integration, we ensure that homeschooling takes place and that parents contribute to identifying their children’s learning barriers early.’

A 17-year-old male learner, participant 3 (Ayanda), had this to say:

‘Artificial intelligence (AI) tools like Aithor enable me to write error-free essays for my English projects. From there, I will have enough time to study for my assessments as the tool used to produce quality material that needs no further correction by the teacher. I even see no need to use the dictionary, as was the case before the introduction of these AI tools. I can safely say that AI has become my research assistant. These digital tools have improved my academic performance scores as I easily download YouTube videos to clarify challenging concepts in Physical Sciences.’

The utterances made by participants value the integration of ICTs in the curriculum as they enable both teachers and learners to do their work more effectively and efficiently. In the voices of Lim and Toh (2024), it is argued that teachers who upload apps on learner gadgets which can be used both in class and outside the classroom setting to benefit of the

learner who was lagging in class to catch up later at home as the content is available at the touch of the button on their digital gadget. From there, the learners' responses are shared in class to promote collaboration. Gunzo (2020) points out that the rationale for computer usage in education is four-pronged. Firstly, there is a social rationale, where there is a need to capacitate learners with ICT skills as they have become a life skill in today's environment. This means that ICTs are a way of life. Therefore, schools must be a breeding ground for preparing digital citizens, hence the need to integrate ICTs across the curriculum. The second rationale by Gunzo (2020) is the vocational rationale, wherein schools must expose learners to practical skills in using digital devices to capacitate them for the job market. This is made possible by exposing learners to basic computer skills such as Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint presentations, which prepare learners for jobs in the ICT-based working environment. The third rationale by Gunzo (2020) is that ICTs play a catalytic role in teaching and learning, where they promote the learner-centred teaching approach as teachers become facilitators, while learners tend to be at the centre stage of their education. This implies that a school that exposes learners to the above-listed rationales prepares digital citizens with a competitive edge over their counterparts in the job market and life.

The fourth rationale is the pedagogical rationale, where ICT devices provide learners with opportunities and, at times, may play a better role than a teacher (Gunzo 2020). For example, a 48-year-old male Geography educator, participant 2 (Mendu), affirmed this finding:

'ICT integration enables me to assess the level of understanding of my learners. I can see whether they are struggling or mastering the content taught. I could see the excitement when they achieve a specific goal and the frustration when something does not go their way. Fortunately, learners can even continue their studies after the lesson has ended because they always have digital gadgets, and they learn to use them productively, as opposed to surfing the internet and visiting sites that are not beneficial to them as learners. Google Earth exposes them to 3D images that make mapskills [...] exciting.'

Another 29-year-old female Geography educator, participant 1 (Tseko), had the following to say:

'I network within and outside the school through ICT integration, forming PLCs. We then design digital-mediated lessons, which serve as templates for novice teachers in our network. Such lesson plans are used even in our absence due to many workshops held outside the school premises during school hours. From this kind of practice, our learners are not left behind as they get taught, even during our absence. Furthermore, ICT-integrated PowerPoint presentations enhanced with voice-overs allow me to view and evaluate the lesson presentation with my learners in class.'

A 18-year-old female learner, participant 3 (Amkela), had the following to say:

‘Our teacher manages to upload digital infographics that are customised to our context. This has massively contributed to improving my results as I get exposed to challenging concepts simplified by the teacher when he aligns them with the local examples. We quickly access our learning materials on our digital gadgets, including the previous question papers. The exposure to YouTube videos has made it easier for me to tell whether the tropical cyclone is taking place in the northern or southern hemisphere. This is facilitated by the movement of clouds in the video. Such an observation is nearly impossible in the textbook as it is in a printed version, and the clouds are not moving.’

The statements reveal that ICTs can enhance learners’ understanding of challenging concepts, making it easier to understand what the teacher tries to explain. Information and communication technologies help learners develop good work ethics and continue learning even without a teacher. The issue of democratic citizenship crops up as they get engaged in the subject to such an extent that their teachers allow them to have a voice in their education.

■ Promotion of a learner-centred approach through information and communication technology integration

In the voices of Gunzo (2020) and Prasastiningtyas (2024) report that using ICT to facilitate a learner-centred teaching approach helps to improve confidence among learners, as they are directly in control of their learning whenever their teachers give them research tasks and are able to make decisions in the course of that process. This finding aligns well with the TPACK-SAMR theoretical framework, which calls for the CK (substitution) of analogous content with digital content. Through ICT integration, learners can actively participate in learning (Abedi 2024; Mahlo & Waghid 2023). A 21-year-old male learner, participant 3 (Zangwa), concurred with these views, as confirmed by this utterance:

‘Using gadgets to search, collect, and analyse geography data helps me to realise my potential as I learn to identify my weaknesses and strengths. This allows me to ask for help in real time. Unlike when the teacher is teaching me, many problems are solved on my behalf, and I will be convinced that I have understood the concepts taught in class, only to discover that I battle when I am alone at home, in the teacher’s absence. This indicates that I become passive when things are done on my behalf, as I am not directly involved. The use of gadgets [...] improve[s] [my] level of concentration and focus, as I know that every mistake I make will be mine.’

Another 33-year-old female educator, participant 1 (Tsia), had the following to add:

'ICTs enable me to promote learner individualisation. This happens when I upload YouTube videos onto their gadgets. Such videos are accompanied by questions, which my learners attempt at the comfort of their homes. From there, they are given turns to present their responses in class. I then work with peer tutors to check whether the answers given are assisting our learners or not. This creates a platform to capacitate my learners to be responsible for their learning. This promotes teamwork among my learners and creates opportunities for them to become selfless in sharing their knowledge and expertise as they work with each other.'

The statement reveals that the participants believed digital devices and online platforms enabled them to control their learning fully because the tools they use are handy and exciting. This notion corroborates Mahlo and Waghid (2023) and Abedi (2024), who opined that, through ICT integration, learners access a wide range of genuine and reliable sources from online platforms. From there, such learners can communicate with other learners elsewhere and get exposed to different sources of information and subject experts on a global scale. Information and communication technologies enable learners to manage their learning, acquire innovative skills and improve their self-esteem. This becomes possible when non-English-speaking learners use their devices to translate their language into English, achieving their objectives. Teachers and learners will eventually deal with minimal distractions in a class of committed learners. The teacher participants indicated that learners who are heavily involved in their learning and can produce their knowledge are unlikely to forget the work they generated. At the same time, the same cannot be said of the content of handouts their teachers distribute to them, which must be memorised and reproduced, as is the case with traditional teaching methods. Learners must become more innovative and acquire life skills, as they are indispensable in problem-based learning approaches.

■ Reduction of teacher workload through information and communication technologies

Gunzo (2020) points out that, through ICTs, teachers' jobs in class are much more accessible. This happens when the teacher compiles the notes during lesson preparation and uploads diagrams and sketches to help improve the learner's understanding of challenging concepts. By the time the teacher gets into class, their work becomes much easier as the teacher will only be left with the presentation of the pre-loaded content and will play the role of the facilitator instead of using the chalk-and-talk teaching approach in the absence of ICTs. This finding corroborates the TPACK-SAMR

framework, which considers technology, pedagogy, content and knowledge, intending to enable technology-mediated learning. The aforementioned findings align well with the utterances by the 28-year-old male educator, participant 2 (Madi), who contended:

‘Technology makes access to a wealth of knowledge, resources, and information simple. With the help of search engines, online databases, and cloud-based storage systems, we manage to easily download the information our learners need, saving time on data collecting for their assessment tasks. Compared to manual teaching pedagogies, technology tends to be faster and more attractive to all learners, including those who struggle to master their academics. This is possible as digital devices capture images of the learners’ surroundings. As a teacher, I upload DRELABs (digital remote learning booklets) onto my learner’s digital devices to entice them to use them profitably.’

A 37-year-old female educator, participant 1 (Tshedu), had the following to say:

‘ICTs are in a position to mitigate textbook shortages in my subject, as my learners have access to a lot of digital material, which is sent to my learners via their parents, requesting the latter to supply me with their email for effective communication with them. Such communication is critical in ensuring that learners and parents get real-time information required by teachers to improve their performance. The uploaded learning material that is available in a digital format cannot be easily lost if uploaded on cloud storage or emails; even if the device is lost.’

The above statements affirm that ICTs enable teachers to access a vast number of resources within a short space of time, allowing them to vary their teaching as they present information to learners in a variety of ways, such that interventions for struggling learners are put in place to assist them on time. This would not have been completed faster in the absence of ICT integration. Teachers can save their work on digital devices and share it with learners. They can also save their work on cloud storage. This implies that the work prepared digitally can be saved forever, even if the device gets stolen or damaged (Gunzo 2020; Tarisayi 2022).

■ Improved learner achievement through information and communication technologies

Gunzo (2020) and Tarisayi (2022) argue that in the presence of ICTs, learners can be in a position to view challenging concepts through animations, thereby improving their level of understanding of the work that would have been memorised in the absence of digital devices. Therefore, it implies that digital devices have the potential to stimulate more than one sense in a child. To illustrate this, learners may watch YouTube videos during the English lesson, where they view different kinds of animals and

simultaneously listen to the other noises made by such animals. In this way, the senses of sight and hearing are stimulated simultaneously. Abedi (2024) argues that the benefits ICT brings to education outweigh the challenges in that it presents different learning strategies and accommodates different abilities. This allows socially, mentally and physically challenged learners to fully participate in learning (Rizk & Hillier 2022). By its nature, ICT is multimedia and stimulates many senses during the learning process, making learning more effective. Abedi (2024) opined that ICT in education promotes learner participation during learning, making learning conducive to several learners in class enjoying their lessons. In addition, Rizk and Hillier (2022) believed that ICT could provide an international context for approaching problems as well as being a more sensitive response to local needs. Tarisayi (2022) argues that ICTs enable teachers and learners to create powerful multisensory and interactive learning spaces. This finding aligns with the study by Reza et al. (2024), who opined that ICTs produce digital learners who are at ease with using digital devices instead of relying on textbooks, which qualifies them to multitask. This requirement is critical for the 21st-century learner to survive in a fast-paced environment with constant changes. A 33-year-old female educator, participant 1 (Tsia), had this to say:

‘According to the learner’s performance, adaptive assessments can dynamically change the difficulty level, ensuring a suitable challenge and promoting comprehension. Technology enhances the learning process by offering multimedia integration, interactive learning experiences, simple information access, individualised learning, chances for collaboration, visualisation and simulations, and adaptive feedback. These developments help create a more stimulating, effective, and efficient learning environment, making it simpler for students to comprehend the material.’

A 36-year-old male educator, participant 1 (Tshawe), concurred:

‘The integration of ICT has led to the formation of ICT champions in our school, which promote staff collaboration such that we manage to team up with mathematics, economics and geography teachers to identify common aspects that need not be retaught in other subjects but given special attention by experts in their field. We make video presentations that we share while at the same time encouraging our learners to share good practices. Eventually, we noticed a remarkable improvement in learner academic performance scores. These good practices [on the role of ICTs, such as Canva and Mentimeter, in lightening teachers’ workload] are shared with novice and seasoned educators.’

The above response highlights the need to integrate ICTs across the curriculum to facilitate learner understanding of challenging content. Rizk and Hillier (2022) posit that ICT allows learners to participate fully and exchange ideas with their classmates and facilitators during the learning process, including those with learning difficulties. This notion aligns with the study by Zungu (2022), who argued that ICTs improve Grade 7 Natural Sciences teaching and learning because they draw learners’ attention and

keep them interested in their education. This means that ICTs create a room for learners to air their views, making a meaningful contribution to their learning. The studies by Reza et al. (2024) and Chirwa and Mubita (2021) corroborate this notion as it regards the 21st-century teacher as both a collaborator and a lifelong learner. This is possible with ICT integration as the ICT devices are ever-changing and require up-to-date skills development. It is at this stage that teachers can quickly assess their presentation, close the gaps that were created during the lessons, and provide learners with crucial learning material in the form of videos, which help them to improve their listening communication skills and be in an excellent position to know the global trends and expectations in their subjects (Rizk & Hillier 2022). This notion corroborates Tarisayi's (2022) study, which indicated that through ICTs, learners can communicate with each other quickly, regardless of their geographical positions. This also enables them to liaise with their teacher for impromptu academic feedback.

Reza et al. (2024) posit that ICT has become ubiquitous and that all our daily activities cannot escape the influence of ICTs. This implies that denying a child exposure to ICTs is equivalent to depriving them of one of the fundamental life skills. Consequently, this act will contribute to the development of a future illiterate who will lack the skills necessary to become a lifelong learner and a globally competent citizen equipped with essential soft skills.

■ Promotion of self-paced learning through information and communication technologies

Gunzo (2020) argues that children can be motivated to work independently in the presence of computers. This means there will be minimal supervision of learners in the presence of digital devices in the curriculum space. It becomes more accessible for the teacher to support every child at their own pace as the content will be displayed on the projector, and the teacher can individualise their teaching (Nyawo 2023). At the same time, the high flyers are busy working independently; the teacher can assist those struggling with their lessons. As a 29-year-old female educator, participant 1 (Tseko), confirms:

'Through digital devices such as scanners, we allow our learners to scan their responses and the aspects that give them challenges in their homes. This makes it easier for the learner to be at ease with identifying their weaknesses while at the same time keeping records of the areas that were problematic before the teacher intervention took place. ICTs make it easier for us as educators to provide prompt feedback to our learners, as after having received their responses, I can use a WhatsApp video call to show the learners the areas that

are a bit challenging to them. This enables the learner to be part of the learning process as well.'

Similarly, another 32-year-old female educator, participant 1 (Tshiamo), had the following to say:

'Online learning is dynamic and accommodating, enabling us to customise lessons to fit the context of each learner. To present tailor-made and personalised learning material and recommendations, we heavily rely on these technologies to examine individual learner learning styles, preferences, and strengths. They are also in a position to have a voice in the learning material presented to them while being given the liberty to voice their fears and the areas that need to be addressed that are not challenging to them. ICTs enable us to provide learners with homeschooling in the event of unrest in the area around the school or where face-to-face tuition is practically impossible due to illnesses or natural disasters.'

These utterances affirm the ubiquitous nature of ICTs, and that they are vital in equipping learners with digital skills at their own pace. In this manner, learners can acquire new skills and become responsible for their learning. Molotsi (2022) and Ramafi (2022) opined that ICT integration in teaching and learning enables teachers and learners to learn at their own pace and in their own space and time. Rizk and Hillier (2022) argue that ICTs facilitate the introduction of inclusive education. Gubevu (2022) argues that ICT integration in teaching and learning provides instant and timely communication between the teacher and the learners via social media, which was nearly impossible using traditional teaching methods. This way, open and distance learning occurs in every institution, regardless of geographical location. This happens when learners with barriers to learning get exposed to online resources, such as video conferences, that might be appealing to them compared to the approaches used by their teachers when presenting their lessons. Gubevu (2022) argues that ICTs allow teachers to design recorded lessons for learners to access quickly. This ensures that learners can learn at their own pace and access the learning material anywhere and at any time. Information and communication technologies thus assist learners who were lagging in class to catch up in the comfort of their homes.

■ Preparation of learners for tertiary education and for the job market through information and communication technologies

Gunzo (2020) and Bengel and Peter (2021) argue that allowing learners to operate digital devices at a school level prepares learners for both tertiary education and the world of work. This implies that learners using digital

devices at a school level will have no difficulty going to tertiary institutions or joining the job market, as ICT skills are needed in such spaces. This finding is affirmed by a 29-year-old female educator, participant 1 (Tseko), who indicated:

‘With the help of technology, learners can investigate job opportunities, better understand industry trends, and network with industry professionals via online job portals, career evaluation tools, and professional networking platforms. The development of job readiness skills, such as résumé building, interview preparation, and networking techniques, is supported by additional technologies. They may develop the adaptability and lifelong learning attitudes that are key in an everchanging working environment that requires young people who are always willing to learn. They can keep up with new technology industry trends and develop job roles to maintain long-term employability.’

In addition to that, a 33-year-old female educator, participant 1 (Tsia), affirmed that:

‘Online platforms such as YouTube videos can capacitate our learners with presentation skills and equip them with video production skills. They help one another prepare and present videos that can be used in class to facilitate learning. This happens when they are tasked with producing videos where they solve problems. If quality videos are made, we manage to use them to help those learners who are struggling to copy good practices from their classmates while at the same time using the poorly produced videos to train the high achievers on how to identify errors in such videos and ask them to improve their quality.’

Another 38-year-old male educator, participant 3 (Khondlo), had this to say:

‘Digital apps such as Writer Plus are used to upskill learners to take notes using their devices; Sketch It -is there to capacitate them on ICT drawing skills; Google Earth is there to help them find locations, view 3-D images and measure distances on their devices, while Canva App is there to improve their entrepreneurial skills as they can design powerful slides and merit certificates for their projects as well as for their benefit in terms of generating their income. This makes it easier for us as teachers to assist our learners in creating their learning material while empowering us with some digital skills so that we become co-learners.’

These educator participants firmly believe ICTs are viable tools in ensuring learners are prepared for tertiary education and the job market. Rizk and Hillier (2022) opine that introducing ICTs in education paves the way for creating knowledge societies. This brings a paradigm shift in education, such that learners are developed into knowledge generators instead of recipients. Noordan and Yunus (2022) indicated that some countries have opted for customised ICTs to enhance learners’ reading and writing skills. They further argue that ICT has assisted Malaysia in improving its literacy skills in the world rankings. Dunstan and Ismail (2024) argue that through the integration of ICT, Malaysia has successfully introduced Smart Schools. This integration has significantly improved the quality of education, with both teaching-learning practices and school management focused on preparing learners for the information age. As a result, reading skills among

rural learners in Malaysia have also improved. This finding aligns well with the TPACK-SAMR framework geared towards continued capacity development. The study by Rizk and Hillier (2022) aligns with this finding as they indicate that the 21st-century teacher must produce a learner with high-order thinking skills needed for the job market. The traditional methods of teaching that exclude ICT integration will not be able to realise these goals. This means the practices envisage a non-technophobic learner, where learning activities dominate ICTs such as the Internet of things (IoT) and Google Classroom. Gunzo (2020) argue that allowing learners to operate digital devices at a school level prepares them for tertiary education and the world of work. This implies that learners using digital devices at a school level will have no difficulty going to tertiary institutions or joining the job market, as ICT skills are needed in such spaces.

■ Contribution to knowledge

The study has identified the gap in the existing body of knowledge, where teachers spend time preparing lessons and choosing content for learners. This study promotes the use of prompts to entice learners to search for information using digital platforms. In this manner, learners will be motivated to generate their own knowledge, thereby contributing to what to learn and how to learn at their own pace. Digital technologies that are customised to the learner context and language for a better understanding of the surrounding environment.

■ Conclusion

The current investigation focused on whether teachers recognise the value of curriculum integration. The findings revealed that, within this sample, there is general support for integrating ICTs across the curriculum in the South African context. However, individuals accept ICT integration in different ways, with some viewing it as exclusionary. While the participants were generally optimistic, they raised significant concerns about integrating ICTs, such as the need for proper planning and, most importantly, the customised training of teachers in context-based ICT integration skills. For South Africa to gradually improve the quality of education by promoting learner-centred approaches using ICTs, it requires not just more teachers or better-trained teachers, but ICTs in the hands of ICT-compliant teachers to enable effective teaching. 'This is one of the most severe challenges facing both schools and teacher education in South Africa' (Mncube & Harber 2010).

Transforming pedagogical practices in early childhood care and education

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■ Abstract

This chapter intends to explore how pedagogies can be innovated in early childhood care and education (ECCE) to respond to children's early development. The focus of the chapter will be children between the ages of 0 and 4 years, as these are the children who are often neglected as they do not fall within the bracket of those who are in formal schools, for example, those children in Grade R classes. These children are being neglected even though neuroscientists perceive this age group as important in enhancing children's holistic development. Furthermore, it is during these years that, as children develop, certain skills, concepts and attitudes that contribute to laying a solid foundation for them beyond their childhood years are acquired.

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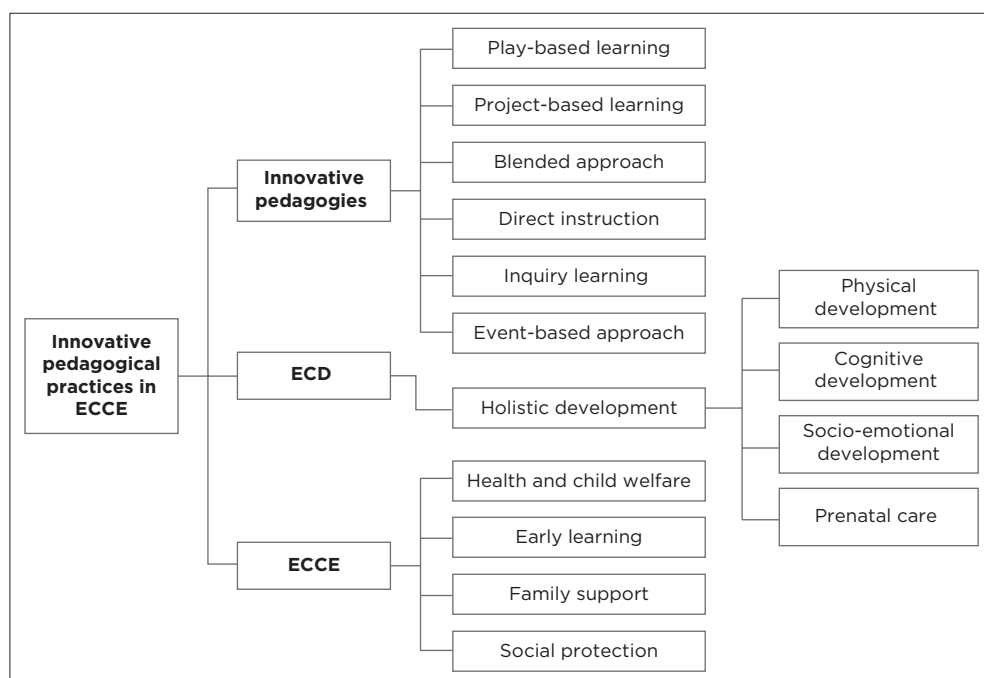
Therefore, at an early age, children need to be introduced to caring and nurturing environments to identify their developmental delays timeously to provide support where necessary. This is because the first 1,000 days of every child's life are crucial to ascertain their development. One element of children's development is physical development; therefore, the environments provided to young children at an early age should be conducive to promoting a playful environment that fosters young children's optimal development. Hence, play is considered one of the important aspects of every developing child. Even with ECCE provisioning, play-based learning has been viewed as one of the innovative methods that can be adopted, as young children can easily learn to comprehend an instruction given using a play-based learning approach. This is because play-based learning is child-centred in nature, and it creates an opportunity for children to become inquisitive, experimental, diligent and independent. As play-based learning may give children more meaningful and equitable learning experiences as per the standardised ECCE curriculum, children may feel connected to their learning environment as they gain confidence in what they do, and this may also enhance personality development. Despite the envisaged transformational agenda of the ECCE sector, there seem to be problems experienced with innovating pedagogical practices in ECCE provisioning.

■ Introduction

This chapter covers the innovative pedagogical practices used in early childhood care and education (ECCE). The primary innovative pedagogical practices of ECCE include different innovative pedagogies that can benefit young children when learning is mediated in early childhood contexts. Moreover, the role of early childhood educators in mediating learning through play, and the choice of assessment strategies adopted when children learn through play. Although early childhood education has been prioritised over the years, children between 0 and 4 years are often neglected. Although neuroscientists perceive this age group as important in enhancing children's holistic development, studies still show that children below 5 years cannot thrive beyond the early childhood years. Moreover, children under 5 years fall behind their peers, especially those from urban and affluent backgrounds. Numerous variables may cause such difficulties during the early childhood years. Thus, this chapter explores innovative pedagogical practices in ECCE.

■ Concept map and clarification of key concepts

The concept map depicted in Figure 5.1 aims to offer a concise synopsis of the core ideas behind cutting-edge ECCE pedagogical innovative techniques, along with an explanation of how they are connected.



Source: Authors' own work.

Key: ECCE, early childhood care and education; ECD, early childhood development.

FIGURE 5.1: Fundamental concepts of innovative pedagogical practices in early childhood care and education.

■ Clarification of critical terms

Early childhood development (ECD) is the period of a child's life that lasts from 0 to 9 years old and represents the physical, mental, social and emotional growth of those years. Moreover, ECD guarantees a smooth transition for kids from birth to primary school age. Children need supportive surroundings in their early years to detect any developmental abnormalities that could affect their development in the long run.

Early childhood care and education refers to the evolution of behaviour, health and learning from the prenatal stage until the primary school transition. This also refers to a wide range of services that serve young children and families, such as child welfare, early learning and education, family support and social protection.

First 1,000 days means a vital developmental window that runs from conception to the first two years of a child's life. This phase plays a major role in determining a child's future growth, health and cognitive development.

Holistic development refers to a person's social, emotional, physical, mental and intellectual development.

Innovative pedagogy in ECCE means blended, creative, engaging and interactive instructional strategies for effective learning experiences and holistic development for young children from birth to 8 years.

Play-based learning is a teaching strategy that encourages children's holistic development by allowing them to explore and experiment with various types of play in their early childhood years.

Schoolification refers to early childhood education becoming more like a formal school, adopting more direct approaches than interactive and play-based learning.

Transformational agenda refers to plans and strategies that aim to bring significant and positive change in the ECCE provisioning to benefit children in the early education years.

■ Conceptualisation of innovative pedagogies in early childhood care and education

Education is the most significant tool that enables individuals and societies to grow, prosper, eliminate poverty and make informed decisions. Investing in the most appropriate and innovative pedagogies should never be underestimated during the early learning years (Peterson et al. 2018). Furthermore, the child's experiences in the first five years of life impact how well they do later in school because early learning experiences influence how people react to future developments. Therefore, when children receive high-quality and developmentally appropriate education during their early education years, there are higher chances of continuing their education and pursuing successful careers when compared to those who have been deprived of such nurturing backgrounds. Hence, it is believed that children should be empowered with skills and competencies to cope with a constantly changing landscape during their early learning years. Thus, the book chapter intends to explore how pedagogies can be innovated in ECCE to respond to children's early development.

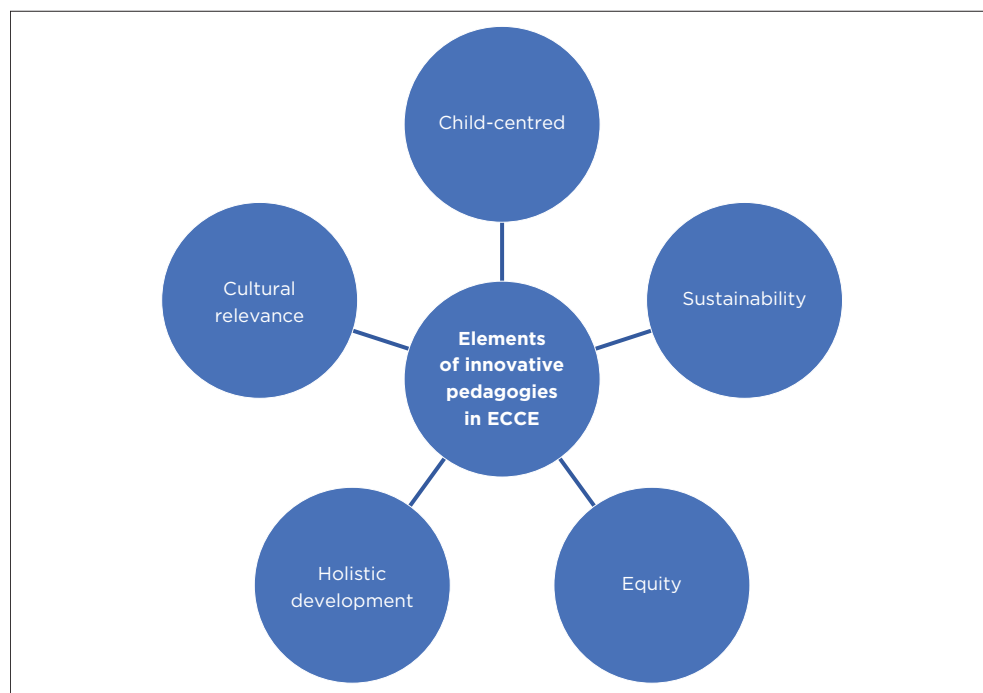
Innovative pedagogies refer to new and creative approaches adopted during the teaching and learning process to ensure that traditional methods are eliminated to encourage children's engagement and creativity. Through innovative approaches, students engage with their peers during the learning process as the aim is to create dynamic and learner-centric environments where students are prepared for the challenges and opportunities that they may be confronted with during the 21st century (Paniagua & Istance 2018). Generally, when innovative approaches are adopted during teaching and learning, they enhance children's critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and adaptability.

In the context of ECCE, innovative pedagogies are perceived to be essential for providing young children with a learning environment that promotes engagement in an age-appropriate developmental manner (Peterson et al. 2018). The innovation of pedagogies during the early years aims to support the holistic development of children, as it also encourages children to prioritise active engagement, exploration and the development of an environment that nurtures the developing child. Through such active engagements, children are afforded opportunities to be creative as the solid foundations are laid for their future success. Children benefit from innovative pedagogies; they are highly motivated as they take a leading role, and learning becomes meaningful to them. Furthermore, the child is seen as a significant competent actor who can master developmentally appropriate tasks with greater confidence.

As innovative pedagogies encourage child-centredness, children should achieve and exercise newly acquired skills. This requires what each child is capable of and uses this understanding of developmentally appropriate child-centred interventions to scaffold, support and transform each child's learning (Kapur 2018). Moreover, understanding children's abilities helps in planning, designing and implementing such innovative pedagogies during the early years. Hence, pedagogical transformations know how children acquire knowledge and skills in each developmental milestone. An innovative pedagogy that celebrates a child's strengths instils a sense of pride and confidence while fostering autonomy and self-directed learning that boosts a child's confidence. This, in turn, fosters resilience as children approach challenges with a positive attitude.

When one intends to adopt innovative pedagogies during early learning years, educators from early childhood centres need to allow for innovative pedagogies. The key aspects of planning for innovative pedagogies are shown in Figure 5.2. Figure 5.2 stresses the importance of active learning, where teaching and learning need to revolve around the child as a competent learner with respectful interactions between children and educators. Again, when ECCE pedagogies are innovated, socio-emotional, physical, cognitive and moral development are encouraged.

Physical development in early childhood includes gross and fine motor abilities. Gross motor skills involve big muscular groups, such as leaping, running and climbing. In contrast, fine motor skills are small motions that require hand strength and dexterity, for example, picking up small objects, fitting objects, zipping, feeding, etc. Play advances the development of both fine and gross motor skills (Sutapa et al. 2021). Children repeat certain body movements just for pleasure, and these movements develop body control. For example, a toddler first hits a toy, then tries to grab it and finally manages to pick it up. Subsequently, the child shakes the rattle or



Source: Author's own work.

Key: ECCE, early childhood care and education.

FIGURE 5.2: Elements of innovative pedagogies in early childhood care and education.

perhaps brings it to his mouth. In this way, the infant progresses from simple to more complex gestures.

■ Examples of physical activities for different age groups

For babies under 1 year, if they have not begun to crawl yet, adults should motivate them to be physically active by reaching for objects and grasping, pushing and pulling both large and small items, moving their heads from side to side, and engaging their bodies and limbs during daily routines as well as during supervised tummy time and other play activities on the floor.

For example, tummy time that lasts for a few minutes several times a week assists babies in practising the lifting of their heads and chests by extending their arms. This physical activity enhances the strength of their arm, chest and back muscles. While participating in tummy time, babies also explore their surroundings and interact with their environment.

Play-based adult-child interactions can create a soft, clean surface and a safe space that can be used for this intentional baby's physical activity.

From 12 to 24 months (2 years), toddlers become more energetic as they engage in purposeful play. Purposeful play is essential for any creative and suitable physical activity, and it can be performed indoors and outdoors. Moreover, children may engage in physical activities such as standing, participating in moving games, pulling, sorting, rolling and constructing towers with suitable toys such as blocks, in addition to larger movement activities such as skipping, hopping, running and jumping.

From ages 24–48 months, children experience rapid development of their motor skills, with significant improvements in fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination (Amelia 2024). Activities that involve moderate to vigorous intensity, such as threading, hide and seek, ‘Simon says’ games, indoor and outdoor obstacle courses, jumping, balancing exercises and various forms of dance, become more prominent.

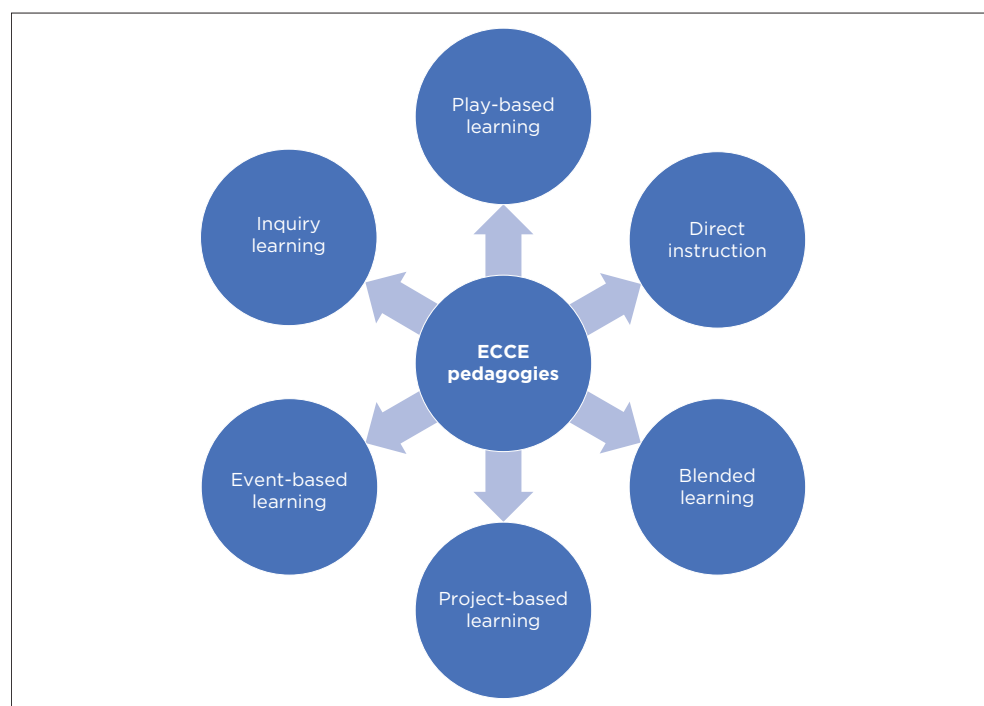
Innovative pedagogies should stimulate children’s emotional development, as anxious children may be helped by role-playing to cope with emotional conflict (Malik & Marwaha 2023). A child’s self-awareness deepens as children explore an event through role-playing or symbolic play. This encourages children to socially interact with peers during the innovative pedagogies as they begin to experience joy from contact with others and engage in behaviour involving others, for example, learning about boundaries, taking turns, teamwork and competition. When children are socio-emotionally smart, they also learn to negotiate with different personalities as they practise sharing, waiting and being patient. As children engage in play with their peers and families, their moral development is enhanced as they learn some acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. This helps children learn how to be kind and charitable to others (Yalçın 2021). Hence, their cognitive development is enhanced. This is because when pedagogies are innovated, they may encourage children’s ability to think, reason, explore and extract meaning from experiences encountered in multiple contexts and social relationships (Galotti 2018). In addition, children may be encouraged to gain knowledge and exercise their abilities to think, remember and solve problems through games and puzzles. Moreover, children may be involved in make-believe play to stimulate several types of learning, as language is strengthened because of children’s communication.

Through innovative pedagogies, quality learning opportunities are available for all children; hence, responding to young children’s diverse learning needs is promoted and sustained. Lastly, learners’ socio-cultural context should reflect indigenous knowledge that supports children’s development and learning. This chapter focuses on the innovative pedagogies that can be adopted.

■ Types of innovative pedagogies in early childhood care and education

The innovative pedagogies in ECCE acknowledge the unique learning and development needs of young learners in the early childhood education years. Pedagogies are innovated to ensure that the foundation for lifelong learning is created. In addition, such pedagogies involve peer collaboration and child-educator collaboration to provide a supportive and enriching early learning experience. Numerous types of lifelong learning may be adopted to enhance effective teaching and learning. Some of the pedagogies are mainly for older learners to accommodate their level of cognitive complexity. This chapter focuses on the types of innovative pedagogies in ECCE.

Figure 5.3 illustrates the innovative pedagogies that can be implemented in ECCE. Educators have various innovative pedagogies to choose from when facilitating learning, but the ones highlighted in the figure are particularly relevant for ECCE. The types include (1) play-based approach, (2) direct instruction, (3) blended learning, (4) project-based approach, (5) event-based learning and (6) inquiry learning.



Source: Authors' own work.

Key: ECCE, early childhood care and education.

FIGURE 5.3: Innovative pedagogies in early childhood care and education.

BOX 5.1: An example of a blended learning activity from Sizamele Preschool.

At Sizamele Preschool, during small group sessions, a teacher introduces vegetables while discussing their characteristics, shapes and colours. Today, the spotlight was on yellow vegetables. She had put on the display table a butternut squash, a carrot and a yellow pepper, which the children were already familiar with. The lesson expanded to include which of the three vegetables the children preferred to eat the most. She informed the children that she would send a task home via their parents' cell phones. The teacher shared a brief 3-minute video of the story titled 'Quarrelling Vegetables'. The final instruction was that, from the provided pictures, they needed to cut three vegetables that were quarrelling.

Source: Authors' own compilation.

A play-based approach is an educational method that focuses on learning through play, particularly for young children (Hunter 2019; Stagg Peterson & Friedrich 2022). This approach recognises that children naturally play to acquire new knowledge and develop social skills. While the direct instruction method involves teacher-centred presentation of information, the teacher takes an active role in conveying information, providing explanations, modelling skills and leading students through practice activities (López et al. 2017). Pedagogies can be innovated through blended learning experiences (Mozelius & Rydell 2017). The adoption of blended learning has increased, especially during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent lockdown periods. Box 5.1 is an example of a blended learning activity from Sizamele Preschool.

This approach to technology integration is preferred because it goes beyond merely using technology in teaching. A key feature of innovative pedagogies is child-centred learning; therefore, project-based learning encourages learners to engage in complex and thought-provoking projects, allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Almulla 2020). Through project-based learning, learners are active when learning, collaborating with peers, problem-solving and critical learning. With event-based learning, Kiefer et al. (2022) and Nguyen, Watson and Dominguez (2016) argue that during the early learning years, learning takes place in response to planned events in real-life contexts where learners are encouraged to investigate, solve problems and provide a sustained context through which learners can connect to knowledge in practice. When learners are engaged in inquiry-based learning, they construct knowledge as they discover the information. This learner-centred approach encourages students to ask questions, investigate problems and develop solutions independently or collaboratively throughout the teaching and learning process (Shanmugavelu et al. 2020). This chapter focuses on play-based learning as the pedagogy for children in their early years.

■ Play-based learning as an innovative pedagogy

Play-based learning promotes the development of children as children learn through play and engage with the material presented to them in a

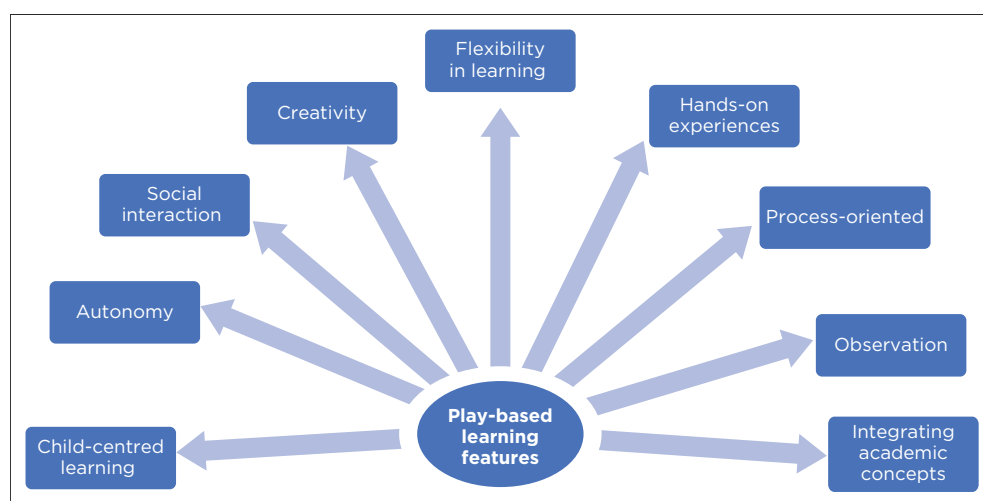
meaningful way (Kiran 2020). Early childhood educators should explore different types of play to provide structured and guided play and have clear objectives to be achieved. When young children learn through play, the learning outcomes need to be explicit so that educators can see young children's progress and the interventions that may be required when necessary. When children are engaged in play, early childhood educators observe how children play and interact with peers. When children learn through play, it must be connected to something they are familiar with for them to make connections. They may find learning joyful, exciting and motivating. Although children may have difficulties with playing activities, with adult support, they may bring laughter and feelings of competence to the children. Such a feeling may encourage them to be more engaged.

Early childhood educators need to acquaint themselves with key features of play-based learning shown in Figure 5.4 as a way of planning how to mediate learning for young children in early education centres.

The implementation of play-based learning has not been without challenges, despite the understanding that young children learn best through play. In addition, when planning for play-based learning, it is crucial to recognise the various types of play and their characteristics. Early childhood educators must be aware of the stages and types of play to effectively facilitate learning during the early years.

■ Stages of play

Children's healthy development is closely linked to play, as it allows them to explore the world around them. Play-based learning enhances their



Source: Authors' own work.

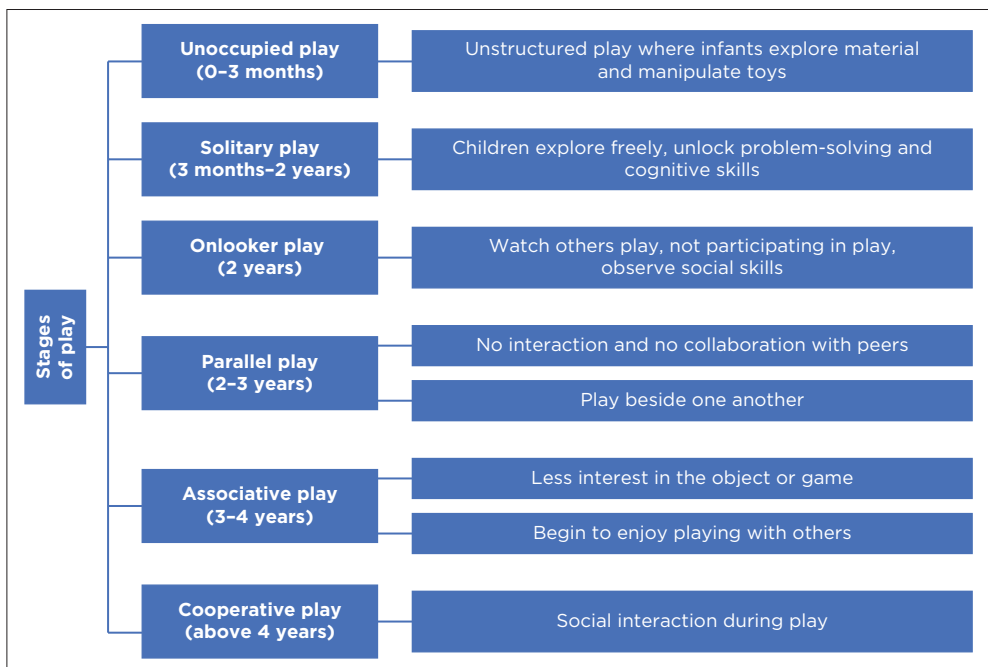
FIGURE 5.4: Key features of play-based learning.

holistic development. As children grow, they progress through various developmental stages, and these milestones depend on their age. Understanding these stages is crucial for recognising what young children can and cannot do. As a result, there are six stages of play that children progress through in their first five years of development that have been coined by the Researcher Mildren Parten (Rymanowicz 2018).

Figure 5.5 illustrates the stages and their related ages of play in early childhood education. This chapter focuses on children under 5 years old, who are often overlooked in terms of meaningful programmes that enable them to thrive beyond their early years. Consequently, early childhood educators must be aware of these stages to effectively plan activities that align with children's developmental capabilities. In addition to understanding the stages of play, educators should also be familiar with the various types of play to enhance their planning for children's play in early childhood.

■ Types of play in early childhood care and education

As mentioned by Leong and Bodrova (2015), there are different types of play that young children may be engaged in during their childhood years (see Table 5.1).



Source: Authors' own work.

FIGURE 5.5: Stages of play.

TABLE 5.1: Types and description of play.

Type of play	Play description
Constructive play	Children start building and constructing using a range of modelling materials (clay, playdough and plasticine), recycled materials (cardboard boxes, plastic tubing) and commercial toys (Lego, Tinkertoys and blocks). Children spend a lot of time playing with intricate commercial model sets. Children engage in both alone and group play, frequently blending it with social and imaginative play.
Exploratory play	Young children use their senses of touch, mouthing, tossing, slamming and squeezing to investigate items. Because they employ their senses to create dough, clay and paint, this kind of play improves their sensory experiences.
Fantasy play	Throughout their early years, many young children spend a significant amount of time playing imaginatively by themselves. They create screenplays and take on multiple roles at once. This type of play is typically supported by toys or props (such as dolls, cars and action figures). As children become older, they typically use a lot of tiny objects or miniature people to construct vast worlds in solitary pretence. Youngsters create increasingly intricate narrative scripts and adopt social roles, which they then act out in small groups with friends.
Functional play	When children are engaged in functional play, they use body movements with or without objects. Such body movements include running, jumping, sliding, manipulating and stacking objects, and dumping.
Games with rules	Children begin to play formal games in social groups. Such games have fixed and predetermined rules, for example, card games, board games, soccer and hockey. When there are rules set for the games, children are taught about fairness as they enjoy playing with peers or family.
Physical play	In physical play, children can make objects move, for example, crawling after a rolling ball. Physical play includes rough-and-tumble play, an exclusive form of social play that is mostly popular with little boys. Rough and tumble play describes a series of behaviours used by children in play fighting. During physical play, this can help in building a child's muscles, bones and physical skills.
Social play	Children learn to play with other children, taking turns when playing, cooperating and sharing the toys used when playing. Through social play, children develop language skills as they socialise through play.

Source: Authors' own work.

When children learn through play, educators need to have a clear objective to be achieved so that the choices made are observed to see if what was intended is achieved. This may assist in ensuring that children are supported, and interventions are made in instances when the children do not do as intended. This implies that, during play-based learning, whether structured or unstructured, children should always be under the guidance of an adult. Hence, the role of early childhood educators during play-based learning is discussed next.

The role of early childhood educators in play-based learning

Early childhood learning educators need to support young children to reach their full potential when learning through play. This also includes supporting them when engaged in self-guided discovery. Young children

need to be supported by ensuring that safety and hygiene measures are adhered to. Early childhood practitioners need to comply with the safety and health standards in ensuring that the play area is conducive to children's learning in both outdoor and indoor learning spaces. Although there is free play and guided play, when children are playing, they become creative and autonomous; hence, the degree of adult guidance is necessary to ensure that young children benefit (Pyle & Danniels 2018). The level of guidance and assistance during play-based learning needs to be exercised with caution, as children may feel that they are deprived of opportunities for meaningful learning.

When planning for play-based learning, early childhood educators need to choose activities and programmes that are meaningful to children, as this will encourage children to become industrious during play, even when it comes to choosing the play area of their interest in the classroom. Moreover, educators need to use resources decisively, the route of constructive play, and deliberate strategies for interacting with children to develop important concepts and skills in all content areas (Pyle & Danniels 2018). Children need to be afforded opportunities to choose the toys they want to play with and with whom they want to play. Educators need to accommodate incidental possibilities when children learn through play to ensure that children's development is enhanced in the process of play. Educators need to consider the knowledge, skills and interests that children have outside of the early childhood setting and base play-based activities on these needs, interests and everyday experiences. For teachers to execute the responsibilities when children learn through play, they need to have sufficient pedagogical knowledge so that they can adequately plan, organise and implement play-based learning with confidence. Hence, Paniagua and Istance (2018) mention that preparing young children to become lifelong learners requires a better understanding of how pedagogy influences learning. In addition, educators need to prepare materials and spaces that are available to children in shaping their play. When stimulating activities are designed, these will promote meaningful, active and creative play. When early childhood educators create a safe and supportive emotional environment for children to play, children gain confidence and become inspired. As children are engaged in play-based learning, educators need to ensure that they develop social and emotional skills, as this will enable children to be in control of their activities. This means that educators need to promote a child-centred approach when children learn through play. At all times, educators need to ensure that when children learn through play, they observe and assess the children. This helps them to see the children's progress in terms of their development and provides guidance when necessary. Pyle and Danniels (2018) emphasise that early childhood educators should

understand play-based learning in both indoor and outdoor environments to foster independence among children. Therefore, educators must facilitate learning, support children's decisions and plans, monitor their activities and provide assistance that aligns with what the children are doing. At the same time, they should encourage challenges and extensions related to the children's interests. Although play-based approaches are advocated by many scholars as the best approach for the benefit of young children, the gap between the theory of adopting play-based learning as an innovative pedagogy and the daily practice in early childhood classrooms remains a concern.

■ Challenges of play-based learning

Despite the recognised benefits of play, children are not always allowed to participate in such experiences when learning during their early childhood years. Insufficient knowledge of early childhood educators may be the result of educators not adopting transformed pedagogies that benefit children during the early education years. Failure to adopt an innovative pedagogy when mediating learning in the early learning years leads to Schoolification, where educators opt for direct teaching methods that are more teacher-centred over play-based learning that promotes children's creativity and engagement when learning. Pyle and Danniels (2018) raise concerns about the decline in free playtime, attributing it to a greater focus on meeting academic benchmarks through teacher-directed instruction. In some cases, the activities used for teaching and learning do not align with the children's developmental stages, compromising play-based learning. Educators may expose children to play activities that are inappropriate for their age, as defined by Parten's stages of play. Additionally, this issue may stem from inadequate educator preparation and a lack of resources that could facilitate play-based learning.

As mentioned by Fonsén et al. (2020), the delivery of high-quality early childhood education necessitates qualified pedagogical leadership. However, studies reveal numerous challenges associated with recruiting, selecting and retaining well-trained and qualified early childhood educators. This results in early childhood educators not being able to implement the National Curriculum for children between 0 and 4 years, which requires the adoption of play-based learning that is appropriate for the age of the children in the early childhood centres. This is despite the fact that play is perceived as an approach for children to handle stress, as play is important in handling daily emotions while children are encouraged to be resilient during trying times (Jensen et al. 2019). However, there is evidence that adopting play-based learning in early childhood education has faced insurmountable challenges. For example, educators have been complaining about insufficient resources

available to engage children in play when learning. In addition, early childhood educators have been reported to have limited content knowledge and understanding of play-based learning practices (Keung & Fung 2020). This may be caused by the early childhood educator's preparation in teaching children under the age of 5 years. In some instances, from the early childhood spaces, the training of educators is still fragmented as numerous service providers offer training to early childhood educators based on their business interests and not in response to the national call. This has compromised the adoption of innovative pedagogies in early childhood spaces as educators continue to subject children to direct instruction that is not transformed in terms of making learning meaningful to the children who are in the early childhood centres. Inadequate training of educators in early childhood education results in teachers not being sure of the role that they are to play during play-based learning. As a result, they opt for traditional methods that are not child-centred (Bautista et al. 2019).

There is evidence that not all early learning educators are challenged with adopting play-based learning during the early childhood years. However, the challenge experienced by educators when implementing play-based learning in early learning years comes from parents and caregivers. This is because, for parents, learning is often equated with 'schoolification', where children are expected to acquire specific knowledge and skills. Consequently, play-based learning is not recognised as part of formal schooling, which tends to prioritise more rigorous instruction (Fesseha & Pyle 2016). This perception poses challenges for the adoption of play-based learning, particularly when early childhood educators lack the skills to innovate pedagogies during the early learning years. As a result, this situation may have adverse effects on assessing children's readiness for formal education, as developmental milestones and delays may go unrecognised. Having a deeper understanding of children's developmental milestones enables early childhood educators to understand how to plan and implement age-appropriate play-based pedagogies, while inadequate knowledge may prevent them from doing that and end up adopting meaningless play-based pedagogies that do not respond to the child's development. Once educators understand children's development, when adopting play-based pedagogies, they begin to understand the importance of assessment in collecting evidence about children's development.

■ The assessment strategies used in play-based learning

The role of assessment is important in checking whether the learners being assessed have achieved the intended outcomes, as assessment makes inferences about what children have learned. The research on assessment

in education has transformed over the years to accommodate new trends and innovative pedagogies (Davari-Torshizi 2020). This helps in gathering enough evidence about what children can and cannot do during the early learning years. Thus, this chapter examines how assessment is carried out during play-based learning. Cowie and Harrison (2020) believe that assessment needs to be focused on a particular discipline or area. This helps in understanding what has been achieved and what interventions are needed to support the learners who still experience challenges in the assessment practices during the early childhood years. The evidence gathered during the assessment process determines what needs to be accomplished differently to ensure that the purported outcomes of the assessment are achieved.

During the early childhood years, educators have a huge task of teaching and assessment, and this must be carried out daily to track the children's progress and development throughout the childhood years (Guarrella & Cohrsen 2023). Assessment is important during the early years of a child's life because it allows educators to trace the developmental delays and advise parents and caregivers of the intervention to be adopted in supporting the children's development. The assessment that is conducted in the early childhood years prepares the children for formal school, as it gathers evidence about the significant growth in academic outcomes. When assessing during the early childhood years, the purpose of assessment needs to be clear, as it will determine what assessment will be carried out; hence, diverse assessment strategies need to be adopted for different activities to ensure that learners have achieved or not (Pyle et al. 2020).

As children develop, there are areas of their development that need to be assessed. Educators need to develop checklists that they use when children learn through play. Educators need to know the skill or development area to be assessed. This requires educators to be vigilant and always engaged when children are engaged in play-based learning (Deluca et al. 2020). For example, when assessing the children's physical development, educators need to look for children's movements and grasping skills, and this assesses the fine motor and gross motor skills of children. Even when children play, it is important to observe how they interact with other children, as this shows the development of social skills, especially when they can share and take turns with peers when playing. Some play activities require children to use problem-solving skills, reasoning and remembering, and this may assess children's cognitive development. The skills that can be assessed when children learn through play are integrated; they cannot be assessed in isolation because from one activity, the educator can have myriad assessment activities performed to assess children during the early learning years. During play-based learning, when children socialise with peers, as they play, educators may observe how they respond to other

children when accidentally hurt by other children during play, even when children find it difficult to manipulate the toys. Children's emotional well-being is crucial for their development, and educators need to devise mechanisms of self-regulation in children so that they are in a balanced emotional state. Consistent observation and record keeping are important when assessing in early childhood years; this is because with play-based learning, one cannot assess the acquisition of knowledge, but what matters is how skills have been mastered and how children have developed holistically.

■ Implications for innovation pedagogies in early childhood care and education

Innovative pedagogies in ECCE are important for effective teaching and learning because they encourage active learner engagement, encourage meaningful learning and equip early childhood educators with the following:

- An understanding of children's holistic development and appreciation of different developmental milestones
- Insight into innovative pedagogies that may be adopted in ECCE and teachers' ability to choose the age-appropriate pedagogies in line with the child's development
- Deeper understanding of play-based learning, stages of play and different types of play
- Capability to have an insight into challenges faced by learners during play-based learning, providing support when necessary
- Ability to select suitable and appropriate assessment strategies based on holistic development to gather relevant evidence.

■ Contribution to knowledge

This chapter explores innovative pedagogies in ECCE to enhance children's development. Innovative pedagogies have been adopted in ECCE to ensure that the provisioning of ECCE is transformed to empower children with the necessary skills during their childhood. However, early learning educators still experience challenges with innovating pedagogical practices during early childhood education. This chapter contributes to knowledge by addressing the practical implications of play-based learning in early childhood education. While the benefits and challenges of this approach have been widely researched, there has been little focus on its practical application. Therefore, the chapter explores assessment strategies that early childhood educators can adopt for play-based learning. Again, through this chapter, early childhood educators may recognise the

importance of choosing age-appropriate pedagogies and appropriate assessment strategies that promote young children's holistic development through expanding conventional teaching approaches. In addition, this may enable early childhood educators to identify children's developmental milestones and setbacks to provide support where necessary. The different types of play presented in the chapter provide early childhood educators with practical ways of ensuring that all children are accommodated during play-based learning, regardless of their diverse needs. Concerning the global education agenda and conversations about ECCE for sustainable development, this chapter brings an African perspective to foster interconnectedness and a deeper understanding of education that promotes responsible citizenship. Lastly, this chapter contributes to the agenda of professionalising the ECD workforce, because it has implications for teacher education as early childhood educators may be introduced to assessment strategies that contribute to professional growth that can shape children's education beyond their childhood years.

■ Conclusion

The assessment conducted during early childhood prepares children for formal schooling by gathering evidence of significant growth in academic outcomes. It is essential that the purpose of the assessment is clear, as this will dictate the assessment methods used. Therefore, diverse assessment strategies should be adopted for different activities to ensure that learners' achievements are accurately measured.

Exploring the tension between authority and democratic schooling in South Africa

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■ Abstract

Despite several efforts to establish democracy in South Africa through the advancement and protection of fundamental rights as enshrined in the *Bill of Rights* Chapter 2 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996* (Republic of South Africa [RSA] 1996), it is not surprising that learners and teachers still find themselves operating in rigid hierarchies that continue to be imposed on them because of the authoritarian legacy in South African schools. In both theory and practice in schools, authority is often confused with authoritarianism. While the former is used by those

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in power as a mechanism for maintaining order, the latter manifests in unilateral action that disregards seeking the consent of stakeholders or taking their decisions into account. However, the main argument against authority in education is based on the claim that it robs learners and teachers of participation in school governance. This is because authority concentrates power in the hands of a single person or a small group of persons who then make and implement decisions about what to learn, how to assess learning and the makeup of the learning environment without consulting the very people these decisions will impact directly. This development has, therefore, become controversial in democratic schooling. Furthermore, authority has become a critical issue, given that resistance to all forms of authority has often been to the detriment of an orderly schooling environment. This chapter examines the basis and role of authority in education, the tenets of democracy, and the actualisation of democracy within the South African education system. A systematic review of literature from journal articles, books and websites was also employed to examine the tenets of democracy and the conflicts between traditional ideas of schooling and democratic schooling. The study revealed that educational authority, like any other type of authority, must exhibit democratic values, and for any educational practice or action to be considered acceptable and legitimate, it must be transparent and founded upon consultation and consensus. These criteria ensure that practices and actions within the sphere of authority are conducted openly and with input from relevant stakeholders. The study, therefore, concludes that while democracy may allow for the pursuit of personal interests without regard for others, democratic schooling should prioritise cooperation and collaboration above competition among relevant stakeholders.

■ Introduction

Authority has frequently been perceived with animosity. In certain educational institutions, authority has been condemned as the primary, if not exclusive, source of malevolence in education. It was understood similarly to royal absolutism during the 18th century and, subsequently, from some perspectives, to the capitalist corporation in the 20th century (Friedrich 1972). Thus, Peters (1973) asserts that authority is connected to an individual's voice and demeanour and contends that seeing it as a manifestation of power is erroneous. The author also contends that combining power with force obscures the distinct attributes of human nature, which markedly separate it from phenomena in the physical or animal domains (Peters 1973). In South Africa, educational authority was predominantly employed as a punitive measure by former authorities (Singh 2016; Veriava & Power 2017). Over time, power became linked to acts of retribution; hence, it faced significant opposition and resistance.

A significant factor contributing to this unfavourable situation was the method by which education and schooling were regulated. This is because education was predominantly structured through authoritarian methods (Ngoepe 1997).

Thus, because of the inadequacy of democratic institutions and practices in education, control in the majority of South African schools was seldom founded on the agreement of those being governed. There was less regard for majority choices, freedom of expression and the acceptance of religious and ethnic diversity. Moreover, the value of decisions arrived at by common consensus was hardly recognised and, instead, control was maintained by violence and brutality (Mncube, Davies & Naidoo 2014; Olawale 2021). Given that schools primarily focus on the promotion and dissemination of diverse types of information and competencies, the structure of authority within such an entity should be determined by this central goal. Nevertheless, the antagonism towards authority in education stems from the assertion that it deprives learners and educators of the opportunity to engage in school governance (Ngoepe 1997; Olawale & Mncube 2022). This occurs because of the centralisation of power in the hands of an individual or a select few, who subsequently determine and execute decisions regarding the content of education, methods of evaluating learning and the structure of the learning environment, without seeking input from the individuals who will be affected by these decisions. Thus, this concept has become a contentious matter in democratic schooling, with the question of authority assuming great importance. Hence, this chapter is necessary.

■ Methodology

This chapter examines the current situation of democratic schooling in South Africa, the nature and basis of authority in democratic schooling, factors contributing to problems with authority in democratic schools and the actualisation of democracy in the South African school context. It also examines the tenets of democracy and the conflicts between traditional ideas of schooling and democratic schooling. This chapter utilised a desktop review methodology that involved analysing documents and conducting a conceptual analysis of secondary-sourced data. The data sources encompass various forms such as reports, policies, media articles and a selection of peer-reviewed journals. The search was performed using electronic databases and search engines, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus and ResearchGate. These platforms are widely recognised for accessing the most significant articles across several fields of knowledge. Specifically, concerning matters of authority and democratic principles inside the South African education system, these databases offer excellent material for the desktop study suggested in this chapter.

■ The historical basis and role of authority in education

The foundation of formal education in South Africa was established by Dutch immigrants who introduced the practice of religious instruction in the Cape as part of their historical legacy. Upon their arrival in South Africa in the 17th century, they aimed to sustain and perpetuate their heritage of religious instruction through formal schools (Kallaway 1984). Following the initiation of the first phase of formal education in South Africa, educational provision remained limited until the latter part of the 19th century. This system of education was primarily religious, governed by the Dutch Reformed Church. The concept of secular schools was originally presented in South Africa by De Mist at the onset of the 19th century (Behr 1988; Kallaway, 1984). Nonetheless, it was not until the 1820s that a system of secular schools, following the British model and supported by Governor Lord Charles Somerset, began to emerge, culminating in the appointment of a full-time Superintendent-General of Education in 1839 (Behr 1988). However, the interaction between these two educational paradigms prompts inquiries regarding power within the educational environment. Thus, Jansen (2004) asserts that the South African education system was characterised by a conflict between religious organisations and governmental power, hindering the establishment of a unified educational agenda. Moreover, the function of educators as authoritative figures became essential in facilitating this interaction, as they manage the expectations of both secular and religious communities (Jansen 2004; Soudien 2010).

The place of authority in South Africa throughout the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th century saw significant political transformations. This was because it was a period during which the history of education in South Africa was modified to align with the dynamics of a politically evolving society. A range of administrative initiatives was implemented to deliver education to a dispersed rural population. These educational adjustments persisted until around the mid-20th century (Behr 1988). This is because the role of authority is crucial in the educational setting. Educational institutions have the authority to establish obligatory regulations and ascertain the degree of their enforcement. Establishing and sustaining genuine authority in schools allows teachers to comprehend their role as societal representatives, upholders of moral values and exemplars for learners, thereby fostering a sense of responsibility and accountability among them. In an educational context, authority grounded on logic will facilitate the development of mutual trust and confidence among stakeholders, including educators, learners and parents (Ngoepe 1997). It will also facilitate mutual accountability among them.

The forthcoming order and the information and skills to be conveyed will largely result from their collective responsibilities.

Mann (1986) asserts that power relations in public education are contested. Furthermore, Mann (1986) emphasises that teachers, parents, learners, lawmakers, commercial interests and administrators can no longer create a clear foundation for claims of power in education. Thus, Du Plooy, Griessel and Oberholzer (1982) stress the intricacy of authority relations, identifying authority as a fundamental issue in education and educational philosophy. This issue arises from the varied interpretations of authority by individuals and the divergent relationships that result from these interpretations. In the educational sector, the primary stakeholders are educators, learners and parents. In many instances, these distinct groups of individuals lack a shared comprehension of the significance and use of authority in education. This divergent comprehension ultimately hinders effective relations among various groups of individuals.

Therefore, Du Plooy et al. (1982) assert that the formation of power in education is a key part of educational activity. The authors assert that the objective of education can only be achieved in the presence of open-minded authority and empathetic authoritative direction. This indicates that for any type of effective teaching and learning to achieve an educational goal, some form of authority must be in place to regulate teaching and learning activities in a specific school system (Ngoepe 1997). Hence, the educator's instructional duty of assisting and guiding learners implies that they are individuals of authority or bearers of authority. In this case, authority allows them to intentionally transform their relationship with the learners into the sort of educational scenario that would facilitate the achievement of the educational goal (Du Plooy et al. 1982). If this type of environment has been developed, the educator and learners may be aware of each other's goals. This will ideally facilitate their recognition of the importance of their partnership, prompting them to strengthen their connection in pursuit of their shared objective: the realisation of educational aims (Du Plooy et al. 1982; Ngoepe 1997).

■ Tenets of democracy and actualisation of democracy in the schooling context

Democracy, while difficult to define, possesses fundamental principles that underpin its meaning, perception, comprehension and implementation, similar to other social conceptions. These fundamental concepts serve as benchmarks for assessing the applicability of democratic ideals under specific circumstances, with democratic education being one such instance. The principles that constitute the foundations of democracy are

engagement, consultation, communication and reflective decision-making (Olawale, Mncube & Harber 2023). Democratic schooling, like democracy, does not arise spontaneously; it necessitates deliberate actions by educators and administrators to provide the structures and possibilities that will sustain democracy inside educational institutions.

■ Involvement

Involvement, a fundamental principle of democracy, refers to a dialogue-driven consensus among individuals to cooperate in addressing a particular issue. Consequently, it is contingent upon the dynamics of the interaction among the individuals involved in specific actions required to improve attempts to address the problematic issue. Moreover, the connection between the parties concerned is characterised by invaluable requirements that influence their activities. The challenge is not in whether individuals should be apprehensive about ameliorating their circumstances but in the diversity of engagement or involvement and the existing conditions (Goodman 1989; Ngoepe 1997; Olawale 2021).

Ngoepe (1997) asserts that a normative theory of involvement encompasses a dimension of freedom. The acknowledgement of a right to participate inherently entails the liberty to exercise it. The liberty to express concern is inherent in appropriate engagement. In the academic setting, the involvement of key stakeholders, particularly the primary ‘customers’ of the educational system, namely the learners, is essential and paramount. This factor is highlighted by Goodman (1989), who argues that the issue of student power must be presented as a prerequisite for any discourse concerning education and democracy. Furthermore, authors such as Goodman (1989), Harber and Mncube (2012) and Olawale (2021) highlight that the sole distinction between democratic schooling and traditional schooling is the former’s dedication to involving learners in significant decision-making processes.

■ Consultation

Consultation is a facet of democracy that is fundamentally associated with legitimate power. Consultation is the deliberate acquisition and exchange of perspectives and contributions from relevant parties about the decision-making and practical measures of a specific issue or situation to improve it (Benhamida 1973). In this case, consultation is decided by the relationship between the persons involved and the conditions that are consistent with the former’s conduct. The concept of consultation has normative connotations (Brough 2012; Ngoepe 1997). It is normative because it indicates a pattern of connections closer to association, cooperation and

partnership than subservience, reliance or passivity (Ngoepe 1997). The act of consulting a person in relation to a certain decision indicates that the individual has participated in the process of supporting, approving or rejecting the decision in question. Thus, when it comes to the goals and methods of the decision at hand, the act of supporting, accepting or rejecting a certain decision is an act that carries a distinct level of significance (Ngoepe 1997; Olawale et al. 2023). Consequently, when an individual is solicited for input, it is understood that this action arises from an inherent right possessed by that individual, a right that should also be acknowledged by others involved in the consultative relationship (Brough 2012; Ngoepe 1997; Olawale et al. 2023).

Within the framework of a school, consultation would be beneficial to the improvement of democratic procedures. When all of the different groups are consulted to have their support, approval or rejection of a given decision before it is adopted, this should contribute to the formation of an orderly climate that is conducive to successful teaching and learning (Brough 2012; Ngoepe 1997; Olawale & Mncube 2022). The fact that concerned groups would have been consulted prior to the decision being adopted will make them feel as though they are obligated to respect and adhere to the decision. As a result, it will be the obligation of all affected groups to ensure that such a decision is adhered to, and this responsibility will evolve over time. While learners may be consulted to enhance democratic practices within schools, there are limits to the areas of consultation. Because of varying degrees of ability and experience, it is unreasonable to anticipate that learners will be included in the decision-making process about academic issues, including the curriculum, teaching methodologies and tactics (Ngoepe 1997). Nonetheless, there exist many opportunities for joint decision-making and consultation about school regulations and punishment, extracurricular activities, community interactions and other such endeavours.

■ Communication

Benhamida (1973) posits that communication entails the transmission of information, namely the act of informing relevant entities about all statements, selections and accomplishments that pertain to them. In the educational context, this pertains, among other things, to behavioural guidelines, curriculum decisions, pedagogical approaches, involvement in athletic activities and cultural events, all of which may be associated with the challenges or successes of the institution (MacBeath & Moos 2003; Ngoepe 1997). Benhamida (1973) asserts that the aim of communication should be to elicit concern, stimulate attention and engagement, and foster commitment directed towards the amelioration of

challenging circumstances. The availability of additional information is something that needs to be exercised to accomplish these goals. On the other hand, Benhamida (1973) contends that it is possible to demonstrate that the likelihood of reaching consensus decreases in proportion to the amount of knowledge that is immediately available (Benhamida 1973). Benhamida's argument is indeed valid, as the acquisition of knowledge is inevitably accompanied by a greater diversity of interpretations and conclusions, hence reducing the likelihood of widespread consensus (Benhamida 1973; MacBeath & Moos 2003).

However, Harber and Meighan (1989) emphasise the significance of communication in democracy. The authors argue that communication serves as the foundation for democratic processes, allowing stakeholders at all levels to engage with the increasingly diverse social settings that emerge as society evolves. For Harber and Meighan (1989), communication would also improve the levels of adaptability and promptness of action among the relevant stakeholders. As a result, the significance of making decisions in the form of initiatives to modify the operation of the system is paramount. Thus, in the field of education, the necessity and importance of communication in democratic institutions make it imperative to implement a continuous and transparent communication process (Harber & Mncube 2012; Ngoepe 1997; Olawale 2021). Within the educational context, communication can be enhanced by the exchange of information, engaging in debates, engaging in reflective discussions, addressing conflicts and reaching consensus through the resolution of conflicts. By implication, engaging in this form of discourse will empower schools to effectively address the growing complexity and sophistication of the educational landscape and ultimately establish themselves as democratic institutions (Harber & Mncube 2012; Olawale 2021).

■ Reflective decision-making

Engle and Ochoa (1988) assert that democracy envisions a transparent and dynamic governing structure in which individual citizens are empowered and entitled to assume a decisive role. The authors further argue that people in a democracy ultimately bear the consequences of their government's policies and actions, as opposed to an autocracy where powerful decisions are made at the top, and most people are expected to do nothing more than comply. Thus, one of the cornerstones of democracy is reflective decision-making, which allows voters to hold their government accountable for the policies and activities they support (Engle & Ochoa 1988; Ngoepe 1997). Similarly, in education, one way to make decisions is through reflective decision-making, which is characterised by deliberation that is well-informed, justified and founded rather than based on position,

status or whim (Ngoepe 1997). What this means is that everyone who has a say in the matter ought to know all there is to know about it. Hence, it becomes imperative for stakeholders in democratic schools to understand the process involved in decision-making.

Therefore, implementing reflective decision-making at the school level will empower learners to engage in accountable decision-making that is critical, creative, innovative and responsive. This approach will profoundly impact learners' educational experiences and shape their understanding and approach to life in a democratic society. It is so that within the classroom environment in many schools, currently, a substantial amount of knowledge is imparted to the learners, with few chances for them to interrogate or scrutinise its veracity and genuineness (Ngoepe 1997; Olawale 2021). Without sufficient opportunity to verify information as evidence for different actions, it is likely to impede the growth of critical decision-making abilities in learners rather than adequately preparing them for their roles as democratic citizens (Olawale 2022; Olawale et al. 2023). Furthermore, Olawale (2022) iterates that an education system that prioritises disconnected pieces of information excessively is not only ineffective but, more importantly, is detrimental and hinders the cultivation of critical-thinking abilities. Therefore, for education to progress and for education to align with democratic values, it is essential to involve learners in democratic decision-making processes at all levels (Ngoepe 1997; Olawale 2021). This will lead to more effective decision-making and the development of valuable skills.

■ **The conflicts between traditional ideas of schooling and democratic schooling**

Individuals dedicated to democratic schooling frequently find themselves in conflict with the prevailing customs of education in South Africa. At almost every point, their concepts and initiatives are likely to encounter resistance from both individuals who benefited from educational disparities under the prior administration and those who valued perceived efficiency and hierarchical authority over the arduous endeavour of fundamentally reforming schools (Harber & Mncube 2012; Ngoepe 1997; Olawale 2022). The challenges associated with establishing democratic schools are only surpassed by the more formidable endeavour of sustaining them in the presence of a public that lacks familiarity with the principles and requirements of democratic education (Ngoepe 1997; Olawale 2021). Thankfully, educators who support democracy recognise that democracy is not a clearly defined and readily achievable 'perfect state' (Greene 1985, p. 12). Instead, they strive continuously to provide a more democratic experience. As such, authors such as Greene (1985), Harber and

Mncube (2012) and Olawale (2021) argue that comprehending this type of circumstance is challenging because of its inherent inconsistencies, conflicts and controversies. It, therefore, becomes paramount to understand both the traditional and democratic ideas of schooling.

■ The traditional idea of schooling

Many nations worldwide continue to apply a national curriculum in conventional schools. Teachers within the same discipline deliver identical curricula outlined in the same textbooks. This chapter characterised traditional education within a school curriculum that is systematic, disciplined, organised and instructional (Dewey 1922; Harber & Mncube 2012; Wyett, Dewey & Kelley 1998). As such, educators in traditional schools frequently experience significant pressure to adhere to local or national standardised assessments or examinations. The use of these examinations is necessary as the assessment of teachers' 'instructional quality' predominantly relies on their learners' test scores. Consequently, enhancing learners' academic performance is their primary responsibility and essential focus. According to Feng (2019), such educators embody social and moral authority, occupying the 'high places' inside the classroom. Conversely, such teachers lack intellectual autonomy and do not actively engage in school decision-making processes. Likewise, in the traditional educational setting, learners are deprived of intellectual independence and the delight of sharing their experiences in the classroom (Feng 2019). On most days, learners remain passive in teacher-centred classrooms, absorbing one lesson after another. To succeed in examinations, they memorise ancient texts and formulae (Feng 2019). Thus, Wyett et al. (1998) argue that subject matter is essential for learners to pursue their interests.

For a meaningful learning environment to emerge in the classroom, the incorporation of concepts and pertinent information is essential. These facts can be observed, remembered, researched or obtained through various means. In traditional institutions, the subject content frequently falls outside the interests of learners. The study of science, for instance, lacks substantial firsthand experience; hence, learners' capacity for independent thought is limited to theoretical knowledge (Olawale, Mncube & Harber 2021). In the traditional educational setting, the teacher is perceived as the primary source of knowledge, while pupils remain passive recipients of information in the classroom (Olawale 2022). Consequently, within a one-man principle or authoritarian regime, essential intelligence is restricted to a select few who possess the capability and spurious authority to govern the behaviour of others, unilaterally establishing principles and regulations, and overseeing their implementation (Dewey 1994; Olawale 2021). As a result, learners lack a voice in school activities, while individual engagement, the pursuit

of diverse perspectives and personal experiences are disregarded and undervalued in the classroom.

■ The democratic idea of schooling

Dewey viewed democracy comprehensively, considering it to encompass more than just the choice of individuals to rule (Dewey 1916). He contended that democracy should not prioritise the welfare of any individual or class over others, asserting that its legal and administrative framework must regard the happiness and interests of everyone equally (Anderson 2001; Dewey 1916, 1992). In his article, 'Democracy in education', Dewey contends that 'modern existence signifies democracy, and democracy entails liberating intellect for autonomous efficacy – the liberation of the mind as an individual entity to perform its functions' (Dewey 1976, p. 30). In 'Democracy in education', the author asserts, 'A democracy transcends mere governance; it fundamentally represents a method of collective existence and shared experiential communication' (Dewey 1916, p. 10). He explicitly said that association is essential to any human society; he acknowledged the functional distinction of various groups addressing distinct needs; and he advocated for a form of cultural variety. He perceived the principal responsibilities and objectives of contemporary democracy as (1) evaluating individuals, (2) compensating individuals based on their actions, and (3) granting citizens the right to determine their professions and manage their affairs (Dewey 1916; Olawale 2021).

Since the onset of the 21st century, several countries worldwide have accelerated educational reform and democratic advancement to enhance educational quality and develop competent learners for society (Dewey 1916; Harber & Mncube 2012). Education is essential for countries aspiring to achieve success via democracy, as it underpins the democratic framework (Harber & Mncube 2012; Olawale 2021). The most exemplary democracies are those that foster significant distinctiveness among their members by encouraging participation in numerous collaborative projects, while simultaneously minimising communication barriers between diverse groups (Feng 2019; Olawale 2021).

Thus, individual engagement and intellectual autonomy are essential for attaining the objectives of democratic education. Nonetheless, the traditional educational system has a restricted acknowledgement of the idea of intellectual freedom (Dewey 1976), which significantly impacts two primary components of the school: the educator and the learner. This affects the mental state of both educators and learners. The educator has limited authority to initiate and engage in constructive efforts essential for effective teaching, while the learners encounter situations that hinder the development of personal cognitive abilities and the assumption of

appropriate responsibility for their application. Thus, if the school's trajectory, encompassing the choice of textbooks and other educational resources, is determined by individuals external to the educational system, it contradicts the principles of a democratic school (Dewey 1916; Feng 2019).

Therefore, this notion of singular authority is authoritarian rather than democratic. Dewey (1916) asserts that schools should not be governed by a select few, as this leads to the imposition of prescribed subject matter, stringent oversight of instruction and attempts to dictate teaching methods, which ultimately restrict intelligence and stifle the spirit. Dewey contends that under a democratic educational environment, all participants in the school system, from the elementary teacher to the high school administrator, should possess a degree of influence over educational authority (Alshurman 2015, Collins, Hess & Lowery 2019; Dewey 1976; Sibanda 2017).

Furthermore, Feng (2019) asserts that democracy in education entails that everyone should participate in defining the circumstances and objectives of their endeavours. Overall, the collaborative and spontaneous coordination of diverse individuals results in superior outcomes compared to efforts orchestrated by a select few, regardless of their wisdom, expertise or goodwill. The teacher's time and energy should not be consumed by matters of exterior conformity. They should be afforded the chance for unrestricted and complete utilisation of their vigour; otherwise, their effectiveness may diminish. Feng asserts, 'The undemocratic repression of the teacher's individuality inherently correlates with the inappropriate limitation of the child's intellectual capacity' (Feng 2019, p. 12). Therefore, Dewey posits that imposing pre-existing content on learners' minds undermines the essence of democracy, which fundamentally relies on the premise of moral, self-governing individuals (Olawale 2021). To the learners, democracy signifies the liberty to participate in school activities and the autonomy of intellectual expression within the educational environment (Olawale et al. 2023).

In Dewey's (1922) article, 'What is freedom?', the author states, '[t]he slave is the one who fulfills the desires of others, condemned to operate within pre-set parameters of regularity'. A free individual prefers to risk uncertainty in an open environment rather than get assurance in a confined setting (Dewey 1922, p. 32). Meanwhile, Dewey (1922) underscores that intellect is essential for freedom in action. Thus, reforming education to enhance the individuality of the learners entails establishing settings that facilitate the expression of developing intelligence. The liberated mental capacity for its development cannot be achieved without a degree of flexibility in articulating even nascent emotions and thoughts (Olawale 2021). Dewey emphasises the significance of the liberated activity of the mind

for learners. Regrettably, in numerous nations, the prevailing trend in educational institutions is to diminish cognitive engagement to a submissive or passive absorption of the supplied content (Olawale 2022). As a result, educational engagement has predominantly diminished to rote memorisation, with only sporadic application of critical judgement and active inquiry.

Dewey (1916) contends that daily educational activities should focus on forming judgements, thinking and recalling personal experiences. Therefore, unless educational focus necessitates that the learners actively engage in formulating their issues and participate in their resolution, the mind remains constrained (Dewey 1916; Olawale 2021). To foster independent thinking, as highlighted by Dewey, educational institutions must offer learners chances to engage in the planning and execution of their own learning experiences, because this involvement is crucial for cultivating democratic values and practices. Dewey (1916) further emphasises that schools that neglect to offer these chances hinder learners' capacity to learn about and engage with the essential ideas of democracy (Dewey 1916, 1992; Olawale 2021).

■ A culture of learning, authority and democratic schooling

The notion of a culture of learning is essential in modern educational discussions, highlighting the necessity for conditions that promote cooperation, critical thinking and learner participation (Dewey 1916; Olawale 2021). This culture is founded on the ideals of authority and democratic education, which promote shared power relations between educators and learners (Freire 1970). Democratic education asserts that learners should participate in their educational experience, increasing their engagement in the learning process (Apple & Beane 1995). For instance, the relationship between a culture of learning and democratic principles has been examined in several situations, indicating that schools that exemplify these values often foster social justice and equity (Biesta 2018; Ladson-Billings 2016; Olawale 2021). As educators endeavour to establish more responsive and flexible learning settings, comprehending the subtleties of authority and democratic involvement is essential (Biesta 2018).

School culture denotes the established connections inside a school, founded entirely on a complex framework of values and conventions (Spajić-Vrkaš 2016). The democratic school ethos is characterised by a heritage rooted in democratic ideals and practices, which serve as the foundation for fostering and cultivating democratic interactions within educational institutions. Democratic values are fundamental principles that define the core tenets of human rights: liberty, equality and solidarity (Olawale 2021). Democratic norms encompass the symbols, beliefs,

assumptions and taboos rooted in the complete acknowledgement and safeguarding of human dignity, incorporating the principles of equality, participation, majority rule, minority rights, the rule of law, respect for human rights, free and fair elections and the separation of powers (Diamond & Plattner 2001).

Furthermore, democratic family members are the verbal and non-verbal interactions that enable and foster freedom, equal rights, solidarity, encourage fundamental questioning, open up space for sharing ideas, and replicate an atmosphere of trust, non-violence and respect for differences (Spajić-Vrkaš 2016). The description of the democratic college tradition is based totally on values derived from the human rights concept (Apple & Beane 1995; Ehman 1980; Spajić-Vrkaš 2016). In a democratic educational environment, learners engage in the formulation of policies and the organisation of various activities (Lenzi et al. 2014), while the entire institution fosters the expression of all stakeholders (Vieno et al. 2005). The principles and behaviours inherent in democratic institutions are encapsulated by Apple and Beane (1995) in their book, *Democratic Schools*, where they articulate that the primary objective of a democratic school is to advance 'the substance' of democracy. They regard democracy as an 'idealised' collection of ideals and standards that we must live by and that should guide us. The concept of democracy means that caring for dignity and the rights of individuals and minorities is as important as caring for 'the common good' (Harber & Mncube 2012).

A democratic school encourages learners to tolerate different perspectives (John & Osborn 1992; Mellor & Elliot 1996). A democratic school culture is characterised by distinct connections based on the aforementioned democratic ideals and practices. Mutual trust and constructive relationships among all stakeholders are fostered here, as are debates on community-relevant and essential topics (Homana, Barber & Torney-Purta 2006). Democratic school cultures foster the liberty to articulate ideas and promote the enhancement and application of critical thinking, arising from the establishment of an open environment for the exchange and execution of concepts (Apple & Beane 1995). In a democratic educational environment, democratic ideals and practices are integral to the curriculum, the educational process and school leadership. Hyde and LaPrad (2015) characterise democratic school culture as one in which educators substantially interpret the national curriculum. In democratic school cultures, decision-making authority is collectively shared among all members of the school community, preventing the arbitrary influence of either male or female stakeholders (Mintz 2005). As such, educators, guardians, community members and various citizens are expected to have a substantial role in the formulation of school policies and programmes (Apple & Beane 1995).

Research findings on democratic school culture (Delgado 2014; Dorczak 2014; Gülbahar 2016; Jwan, Anderson & Bennet 2010; Kensler et al. 2009; Normore & Jean-Marie 2008) underscore the significance of school leaders as pivotal actors and catalysts of change. Researchers are focusing on identifying the leadership attributes of administrators that significantly enhance democratic school culture. Numerous researchers concur that democracy and the heritage of democratic schools may be cultivated via practical impact and implementation in daily school contexts (Hope 2012; Moos 2011; Riley 2003; Woods 2004, 2005, 2006). This is especially true when educators and learners are actively involved in school leadership activities, namely in decision-making processes (Parham 1944; Riley 2003; Woods 2005). In other words, school principals are expected to embody the traits of democratic school leadership. Woods (2005), therefore, underscores the necessity for learners, educators and various stakeholders to receive explicit guidance regarding their involvement in decision-making processes concerning the daily operations of schools. He also highlights the importance of implementing 'softer' strategies, such as acknowledging educators for their proficient execution of responsibilities, which enhances motivation and fosters pride in taking initiative (Møller 2006). As such, Hope (2012) suggests the implementation of new institutional structures of administration that can empower the practice of democratic decision-making.

■ Contribution to knowledge

The chapter offers a unique examination of the authority problem within the context of democratic schooling in South African education, highlighting several key areas of novelty. Firstly, it critically analyses the foundational principles of authority as they relate to education, contrasting traditional notions of authority with democratic ideals. This discussion elucidates how the hierarchical structures often present in schools conflict with the principles of democracy, such as inclusivity, participation and shared decision-making. Secondly, the chapter explores the role of authority in fostering or hindering the actualisation of democracy within educational settings. It argues that authority in democratic schooling should not be seen as merely top-down but as a facilitator of collaborative learning environments where students and teachers engage as co-creators of knowledge.

The chapter further addresses the tension between traditional educational practices and the drive towards a more participatory approach to learning, emphasising the need for a cultural shift within schools. It posits that a culture of learning – rooted in involvement, consultation, communication and reflective decision-making – can serve to bridge the

gap between conventional educational frameworks and the democratic ideals that underpin contemporary South African society. Lastly, through a thorough examination of these dynamics, the chapter contributes to the discourse on how democratic schooling can be effectively implemented, providing insights into rethinking authority in ways that respect both the educational needs of students and the broader democratic principles crucial for the nation's development. Overall, its novelty lies in offering a comprehensive perspective on how to reconcile authority and democracy in the pursuit of a more equitable and effective educational system.

■ Conclusion

This chapter aims to examine the fundamental principles and significance of authority in the field of education, specifically within the context of South Africa. The chapter also examined the concept of democracy and its implementation in the context of education, the clashes between conventional notions of schooling and democratic education, as well as the culture of learning, authority and democratic education. The chapter concludes that the ideals of democracy necessitate that the governance of the schooling system should adhere to democratic, representative and participatory practices. Therefore, while democracy is not merely a concept of pursuing personal interests without regard for others, democratic schooling should prioritise cooperation and collaboration above competition among relevant stakeholders. Moreover, it is important for stakeholders in education to understand that the goals of democratic schooling extend beyond only instructing learners in discipline, independent of the development of participation qualities. Thus, if education fails to develop learners' ability to engage in participation or exercise power, it will have failed to foster a crucial virtue necessary for democratic education. Therefore, it is important to recognise that authority, in its true meaning, is closely tied to education as a means of emancipation. In a democracy, the initially imbalanced interaction between individuals gradually becomes balanced as learners transition from being guided by educators' voices to using their own.

The significance of the South African case in the global education expansion and reform project on the global scene¹

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■ Abstract

This chapter explores the significance of the South African education reconstruction project for both students of global education expansion and education practitioners. It explains why this project, alongside the experiences of the past 30 years in addressing the challenges discussed in this book, is noteworthy and instructive for readers beyond South Africa. Additionally, it highlights the potential of future comparative studies to shed light on South African education challenges from an international perspective. Education has been assigned a pivotal role in South Africa's

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socio-political reconstruction project. However, 30 years into this initiative, education in South Africa still faces significant challenges. These challenges encompass three key areas: the quantitative expansion of education, the quality of education and equality within the education system. Notably, these challenges mirror those faced by education systems globally across various national contexts. The best approach may involve conducting case studies in diverse contexts and comparing them to extract guidelines for shaping education that meets the needs of humanity in the 21st century. It is within this framework that the contributions presented in this book should be evaluated, a task that will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

■ Introduction

At the outset of this book, the first chapter highlighted South Africa's significance as a reference point in comparative studies on global education issues and the challenges faced by other nations. This penultimate chapter will discuss the value of the South African case in the context of global education. It will provide the framework for the final chapter, which will place the findings from the preceding chapters within a global comparative-international perspective. While engaging in a comparative exercise between South Africa and foreign education systems, it is also apt, especially in view of the gross shortcomings of South African education at this stage, to look at what South Africa may take from the education record of other countries. The chapter commences with the use of comparative international perspectives as a means to illuminate education issues. Then, each of the issues dealt with in the chapters in this book will, in turn, be put in a global comparative-international perspective.

■ Research methodology: The use of comparative international perspectives to illuminate education issues

The method employed in this research and the construction of this chapter is comparative and international education. To assess the value and significance of international comparative perspectives in addressing domestic education issues, it is essential to clarify what comparative and international education encompasses, its value, and the provisos and caveats associated with using these international perspectives to illuminate domestic education challenges.

The term 'comparative and international education' as a scholarly field of inquiry has thus far resisted attempts to be encapsulated in an easy or widely accepted – and even more so, a universally accepted – definition.

In her seminal publication on the construction of the field of comparative and international education, Maria Manzon (2011, pp. 199–205) enumerates a diverse range of definitions proclaimed by scholars in the field. She classifies these definitions into three categories. The first category of definitions is based on a proclaimed unique object of study. A second category of definitions is based on a (the comparative) methodology. A third category of definitions is based on the role or function, or relevance of the field. One reason for the lack of unanimity regarding its definition is that comparative and international education is a dynamic, expanding field that continually explores new territories and tests new frontiers. This characteristic is aptly captured in the title of the edited volume by Wolhuter and Wiseman (2019): *Comparative and international education: Survey of an infinite field*. So wide and diverse expanse of subject-matter of scholarship is covered by the name ‘comparative and international education’ that Institute of Education, University of London comparativist Robert Cowen (2000, p. 333) believes that there is no single ‘comparative education’, but that it would be more accurate to refer to it in the plural, that is ‘comparative educations’. In the publications of at least two other eminent scholars in the field, this sentiment of Cowen, as to the futility of the quest for a definition identifying a specific object of study belonging exclusively to the field and being shared by all comparativists, is reiterated. Widely respected comparativist of Loyola University, Chicago, Erwin Epstein (2008, p. 373) regards comparative education as nothing but an applied field: the conceptual and methodological tools of all the social sciences, applied to address education issues. David Turner (2020) concluded that attempting to find a definition of comparative education is a fruitless exercise. Instead of searching for a definition, a more meaningful approach would be to study the discourse formations within the field and examine what scholars are focusing on, as suggested by Schriewer (2000). As Erwin Epstein commenced his presentation at the 2011 Comparative Education World Conference in Chungbuk, Korea, he threw this question to the audience of distinguished comparativists, ‘What is comparative education?’. However, his question was met by a dumb stare (Epstein, as observed and described by Wolhuter 2008, p. 323).

While there are many divergent and even contentious beliefs among scholars in the field regarding the definition of comparative and international education, one of the author’s of this chapter argues that it is characterised by its three-in-one perspective on the study of education. These three perspectives are as follows:

- *An education system perspective*: The single case or instance of one educator educating one educand usually falls beyond the scope of

comparative and international education. Comparative education focuses on entire education systems, such as those of Japan or Germany. When an individual educand-educator instance, a single classroom, or a single institution is studied, it is examined as part of a larger education system.

- *A contextual perspective* (see Brown & Schweisfurth 2024): Education systems have no incidental structure and features, but have been created by society, in order to fulfil certain needs that society experiences a need for. This means that every education system is shaped by the society or societal context in which it exists, and it can only be understood by considering its societal context. For example, Japan's education system has been shaped by its societal context, including geography, demographics, socio-cultural factors, the economy, the political system, and religious and philosophical beliefs. This illustrates the contextual perspective. This perspective not only addresses the societal context as a shaping force of education systems but also examines the converse: the impact of education on society. For example, it considers how education can entrench a culture of respect for human rights.
- *A comparative perspective*: Thirdly, comparative education scholars analyse the interrelationships between education systems and their societal contexts across different nations or regions. This approach allows for the extraction of both general and nuanced statements about these interrelationships.

In recent times, there has been a belief rising that the name of the field, comparative education, should be superseded by comparative and international education. The term 'international education' is used here as defined by Phillips and Schweisfurth (2014, p. 60) as scholarship studying education from a global or an international perspective. As the scholarly field of comparative education evolved into comparative and international education, it is believed that single or limited unit studies and comparisons should eventually culminate in a comprehensive, global examination of the international education project.

One of the purposes of this exercise of comparative studies in education is to illuminate domestic education issues, to learn from foreign experience so as to improve the domestic education project (e.g. see Milne & Mholo 2021; Sappleton & Adams 2022). Recently, scholars in the field have begun to refer to the phenomenon of referring to foreign examples in order to justify domestic positions or reforms, a feature visible in both the scholarly and public discourse on education, as 'externalisation' (see Santos, Carvalho & Portugal e Melo 2022). In the global education expansion and reform currently taking place, a rich and fertile ground for such an exercise has been found.

■ The global education expansion and reform project

In Chapter 1, it was explained that, in contrast to preceding centuries and millennia, since the mid-20th century, humanity developed an unlimited belief in the individual and societal ameliorative power of education.

The result was that, commencing in the mid-20th century, a global education expansion drive took off, which is still surging ahead at full speed. The extent of this exercise is visible in the rise of enrolments at all levels of education. These are presented in Table 7.1.

Even after accounting for population increases during this period, the expansion of education remains impressive, as evidenced by the surge in global enrolment ratios presented in Table 7.2.

This global education expansion project was an expensive undertaking, for example, often claiming a quarter or even more of the public budgets of Global South nations, the biggest single expenditure on the public budget. This project should therefore be assessed. In Chapter 1, it was explained that the evaluation of any education system or project should include three aspects, namely: quantitative, qualitative and equality aspects.

To summarise the situation, education globally is seriously lacking on all three fronts. Beginning with the quantitative aspect, even before the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, 258 million children of school-going age (17% of the cohort) were still not in school worldwide (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2020).

Examining the state of adult literacy rates and the actual number of adult illiterates in the world, as presented in Tables 7.3 and 7.4, it is clear that we are still quite a distance from achieving the basic education level of universal adult literacy.

TABLE 7.1: Global growth in enrolments (in millions).

Year level	1950	1960	1980	2000	2020
Primary education	177.1	243.4	541.6	654.7	750.1
Secondary education	38.0	68.9	264.3	543.5	613.1
Higher education	6.3	11.1	51.0	99.5	235.3

Source: Adapted using data from UNESCO (1971, 1983, 2023a).

TABLE 7.2: Global growth in gross enrolment ratios (in percentages).

Year level	1950	1960	1980	2000	2020
Primary education	59	62	96	99	102*
Secondary education	13	40	46	60	77
Higher education	5	8	12	19	40

Source: Adapted using data from UNESCO (1971, 1983, 2023a).

*Primary school gross enrolment ratios over 100% are because of the large numbers of overage learners in such schools.

TABLE 7.3: Global growth of adult literacy rates (in percentages).

Region	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2022
World	67.1	71.4	75.1	76.96	81.30	87.00 (2021)
North America	98.6	98.6	98.6	-	96.09	98.64
Europe	95.5	97.2	98.1	98.91	99.25	Europe and Central Asia: 98.44
Latin America and the Caribbean	72.7	79.8	85.4	90.70	93.27	94.60
Oceania	88.5	90.3	91.9	Oceania: Developing countries: 67.44	Oceania: Developing countries: 71.33	East Asia and Asia-Pacific: 96.04 South Asia: 74.19
Asia	56.2	62.6	68.1	79.42	84.32	
Africa	28.9	40.0	52.6	57.79	62.97	Middle East and North Africa: 80.36 Sub-Saharan Africa: 67.72

Sources: Author's own tabulation of data from Statista (2024); UNESCO (2018), and UNESCO as cited by Cárceles (1990).

TABLE 7.4: Total global number of adult illiterates (in millions).

Region	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
World	760.2	824.1	882.1	788.26	756.03	90.94
North America	2.2	-	-	6.69	6.70	Europe and North America: 0.42
Europe	21.3	16.2	12.0	6.70	6.70	
Latin America and the Caribbean	44.4	44.3	42.2	23.78	20.12	1.46
Oceania	1.5	1.6	1.5	Oceania: Developing countries: 1.57	Oceania: Developing countries: 6.19	Arab States: 9.75 Central Asia: 0.01
Asia	550.9	604.3	659.4	537.44	489.28	East Asia Pacific: 2.72 South and West Asia: 24.50
Africa	139.7	156.2	164.9	201.64	223.68	Sub-Saharan Africa: 49.43

Sources: Author's own tabulation of data from UNESCO (2018, 2024) and UNESCO as cited by Cárceles (1990).

As was explained In Chapter 1, education quality is by no means a simple concept, whether to define or to measure. It is a complicated construct, and impossible to define in one line or even one sentence. A more manageable approach is to analyse the constituent components of education quality. Wolhuter (2014) enumerates the following components of education quality: Input quality, process quality, output quality and product quality. Space here rules out a full discussion on the state of education quality globally. However, it can safely be stated that with respect to all components, serious criticism can be levelled about the state of education in the world, even in affluent countries or countries being hailed

as having exemplary education systems. The following example will suffice. In England, government sources report that around 8 million adults have the numeracy skills of primary school children (Isgin 2023). Furthermore, 60% of disadvantaged learners do not have basic mathematical skills by the age of 16 (Isgin 2023).

Equality or equity in education is also a notion impossible to contain in a simple or universally acceptable definition. However, no matter any of these two terms, equality or equity is defined, at the levels of access to education, progress through education institutions, certification and life chances after certification, inequalities exist worldwide, along the dimensions of socio-economic descent, gender and race and ethnic status – these three are known as the trinity of inequality, as well as along the dimensions of geography, ableism and age. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) stipulates:

[T]he powerful influence of circumstances, such as wealth, gender, ethnicity and location, over which people have little control but which play an important role in shaping their opportunities for education and life. It draws attention to unacceptable levels of education inequality across countries and between groups within countries, with the aim to inform [*discourse and policy decisions*]. (UNESCO 2023c)

Each of these components of the quantitative, quality and equality dimensions has its own gamut of challenges, and each of the topics covers one of these challenges. In each one, South Africa occupies a particular place in the galaxy of education systems, either by virtue of having something to offer the outside world to learn from its own experience and/or on the consideration that South Africa, in turn, can benefit from the experience of other education systems. One particular aspect of the equality dimension of the global education expansion and reform project, an aspect of particular importance with respect to the theme of the book, is equalisation along racial lines. Here, South African education serves as an illuminating case on the world map.

■ Equalisation along racial lines and inclusive education

Certainly, one of the central and most feverishly discussed topics in South African education is the challenge of equalisation along racial lines. Facing this challenge, South Africa is far from unique. As was mentioned earlier, race/ethnic status is one of the well-nigh universal dimensions of educational inequality; together with gender and socio-economic status, one of the trinity or Big Three of educational inequality. An indication of its topicality is the 2023 volume of the *Routledge World Yearbook on Education*, which

has been a standard reference point in education since its inception in 1965. Each year, it represents the synergy of leading scholars around a critical issue in global education. This year's focus is on racialisation and educational inequality from a global perspective (Scott & Bajaj 2023).

The issue of racial equality in education, along with the intertwined problem of racism, has recently resurfaced in both scholarly and public discourse, largely because of the George Floyd incident of 2020. This resurgence is evident in various contexts, such as the theme 'Illuminating the power of idea/lism' and the venue of the 2022 Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Conference in Minneapolis, where the George Floyd incident occurred. The leading journal in the field, the *Comparative Education Review*, published 'Black Lives Matter: Statement and Action Plan'. Two issues later, in February 2021, the journal featured an editorial titled 'Sixty-Five Years of the Comparative Education Review: Black Lives Matter, Ethics, New Directions, and New Ideas'. In this editorial, editor Bjorn Nordtveit (2021) marked the 65th anniversary of the journal and, prompted by the George Floyd incident, pledged the journal's full support for the campaign against ongoing policies and practices in comparative and international education that systematically discriminate against and oppress black, indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC). This commitment includes seeking submissions and publishing articles that lie at the intersection of antiracism and comparative and international education.

With regard to this issue of the imperative to equalise education and education opportunities along the dimension of race, South Africa does not stand isolated from the rest of the world. On the contrary, probably the feature of the pre-1994 South African education system that is best known internationally is the extreme policies and practices of segregation of education according to race. It was likely considered the most urgent aspect of education reform in and after 1994 (cf. Wolhuter 2011).

When the new dispensation dawned in 1994, average education levels were low, despite efforts to expand education in the decades leading up to that year. Additionally, educational attainment varied starkly by race. Almost a quarter of adults (that is, those in the 15-64 years age group) had no schooling qualifications, and only 8% had a post-secondary school qualification (Soudien, Reddy & Harvey 2022, p. 306). One indication of the levels of inequality in the education system in 1994 is the racial composition of the higher education student body, as presented in Table 7.5.

Impressive progress has been made in less than 30 years regarding the equalisation of participation in higher education; however, the enrolment demographics still do not fully reflect the South African population.

TABLE 7.5: Racial composition of the higher education student body in South Africa, 1994 and 2021.

Population group	White	Indian	Mixed-race	Black
Percentage of total higher education enrolments, 1994	41	3	9	48
Percentage of total higher education enrolments, 2021	12	6	6	76
Percentage of total population	7	3	8	82

Source: Author's own calculation and tabulation from statistics supplied by the Department of Education, Republic of South Africa (2005) and AI Overview (2024).

As was stated earlier, while racial inequality is perhaps the aspect of pre-1994 South African education best known, inequality along racial/ethnic lines is a universal dimension of educational inequality, a huge challenge for many education systems around the globe. The most common approach to this challenge has been the school desegregation movement. It was pushed to the centre of education reform globally in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America (USA), and was secured even more prominence with the dawn of independence of many countries in Africa at the same time. In several African countries with significant populations of European descent, school desegregation has been a key strategy aimed at eradicating racial inequality in education. These countries include Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. In all of these nations, as well as many others, school desegregation has been a central tenet of education reform in recent decades (see Mouton 1989). Recent events, such as the George Floyd incident mentioned earlier, have sparked a new wave of publications on school desegregation (e.g. see Boterman & Labato 2022). However, no country can claim to have achieved full equality in education across racial or ethnic lines.

On a global scale, the drive for equalisation has recently come under the umbrella of inclusive education. Inclusive education has emerged as a powerful force in education reform globally (see Tonegawa 2022). While it is often emphasised in relation to including children with disabilities, inclusive education aims for inclusivity for all and addresses all dimensions of inequality. On 25 September 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Resolution 70/1: 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (United Nations 2015). This document spells out the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 4 of these 17 SDGs deals with education. Goal 4 is stated as follows: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (United Nations 2015). Thereby:

Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. No education target should be considered met unless met by all. We therefore commit to making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged. (UNESCO 2015, p. 7)

The challenge of equalisation on racial lines is an acute challenge in South African education, which has placed the international spotlight on the country. On the other hand, inclusive education entails more than equalisation on the racial dimension. And in this regard, South Africa can take note of developments abroad. Neither racial equality nor fully inclusive education in any other respect has yet been attained anywhere in the world. Therefore, Chapter 3, 'Analysing the advancements achieved in inclusive education since its implementation in South Africa', is significant for scholars of education in South Africa and beyond alike. The identification of hindrances is, after all, the first step in rectifying an unsatisfactory situation.

■ **Leveraging technology to enhance the education supply effort**

One of the defining features of the current era in the history of humanity is the information and communications technology (ICT) revolution (see Harari 2024). The unstoppable advances in science and the ceaseless emergence of technological innovations will significantly impact the future, especially if we consider the lessons of the 20th century as a basis for predicting future trends (see Harari 2024).

An instant 24-hour planetary information network had been established because of free access to and widespread use of the personal computer, the Internet and the mobile telephone. Already by 2017, more than 200 billion emails were dispatched across the world daily (Dijkstra 2017, p. 62).

The information and communication technology revolution strongly impacts the supply and construction of knowledge. As a working definition in this volume, information refers to data that have been assembled into categories, classes or other patterns. Knowledge refers to information that has been further refined into general patterns and interpreted within a framework, or structure, of other existing knowledge. The stock of knowledge is multiplying at an ever-increasing rate. Furthermore, knowledge has become democratised, as everyone has access to knowledge by means of electronic media and sources. In view of the general availability of knowledge, it has been argued that the entire orientation of education should change from the transmittance of knowledge to teaching and learning of how to process information, including (and this is getting more urgent in times of fake news with all its potential results) who to evaluate information (see Biggs 2019; Disch et al. 2024; Harari 2024).

Technology has been embraced to extend education and enhance the quality of teaching and learning, even to the point of replacing teachers.

The rise of distance education at the higher education level has been evident for quite some time. One of the first major projects to leverage modern technology for national education was the educational television programme in Côte d'Ivoire during the 1970s and early 1980s. However, this massive and costly initiative ultimately failed because of contextual obstacles within Côte d'Ivoire (Prosperetti 2019). The contextual realities of Côte d'Ivoire were not duly factored in the planning of this exercise. The challenges of applying inspirational models from foreign education systems to the contextual realities of countries attempting to adopt them have been repeatedly demonstrated. Richard Tabulawa's (2013) publication on imported pedagogies in sub-Saharan Africa provides one example. Another instance is the *Escuela Nueva* schools, which were successfully developed in Colombia but failed when attempts were made to transplant them to Brazil (see Tarlau 2017). This underscores a fundamental principle from the field of comparative and international education: education systems exist in relation to and in symbiosis with the societal contexts in which they are embedded.

The COVID-19 pandemic catalysed the harnessing of technology to enhance the education supply effort of nations and of schools (see Fullard, Steyn & Wolhuter 2022). It is frequently opined that the pandemic has laid down a new normal, also in education, implying that in the future, education systems will lean more on technology. In view of previous attempts to harness technology in the education supply project, especially scholars in the field of comparative and international education should tease out the possibilities and limitations of technology in various (societal and education system) contextual settings. Here, the value of the research by Gubevu Bongumusa and Vusi Mncube reported in Chapter 4 on 'Information and communication technologies in the curriculum: Focusing on Geography education', comes to the fore.

□ The parental factor

The state of learner discipline in schools depends on a host of factors. These factors can be grouped into six categories. These are learner-related factors, teacher-related factors, school-related factors, parental and family and home background factors, societal contextual factors and education system-related factors (see Wolhuter, De Wet & Van der Walt 2019). The least researched of these is parental and family, and home background factors. Research has shown that one of the determining factors of the state of learner discipline in schools is the parental or home background factor (see Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention 2017; Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office 1989, pp. 124-127; Ngwokabuenui 2015).

Parental-related factors include child-raising styles, parenting modelling and practices at home, and parental involvement in schools. Baumrind (1966) identified three parenting styles, namely the authoritarian, the permissive and the authoritative parenting style. The authoritarian parenting style is characterised by the parent attempting to shape, control and evaluate the behaviour and attitude of the child in accordance with an absolute standard, often derived from a set of rigid religious beliefs (Baumrind 1966, p. 890). The permissive parenting style is a parent who is to be non-manipulative, accepting of and acceding to the child's impulses, desires and actions (Baumrind 1966, p. 889). The authoritative parenting style is characterised by the parent attempting to direct the child's activities in a rational, issue-oriented way (Baumrind 1966, p. 891). Cramer (2002) identified a fourth style, the neglectful or uninvolved parenting style. Of these four, the preferred mode, also for being conducive to good child behaviour and discipline at school, is the authoritative style. A stable and secure home environment, with parents modelling good behaviour, and parental involvement in school matters, all promote good behaviour and discipline of the child at school. Parents modelling exemplary behaviour at home, and parents engaged in school matters, are conducive to their children being well-disciplined at school. The parental factor in learner discipline in school is, in South Africa as abroad, a much-neglected aspect of research on the issue of learner discipline at school. Therefore, Chapter 2 in this volume, 'Parents as partners in education: A reality or pipedream?', authored by Oluwatoyin Jumoke Adelabu and Vusi Mncube, assumes special significance for both the South African and the international readership.

□ Early childhood education

Early childhood education (broadly defined as education for 0–8 years of age) has gained new importance in view of one of the objectives spelt out in the United Nations's SDGs, namely that pre-primary education should be accessible to all in the cohort by 2030 (UNESCO 2015). This vision is presented out of motivation that it will ensure all children can profit from primary education, and also that early childhood education will lay the basis for the long-term learning and development of each child (UNESCO 2015).

This vision chimes in with many governments worldwide prioritising early childhood education (see Sousa & Moss 2022) and also with the rise of early childhood education as a field of scholarship. In 1946, a group of scholars concerned about the welfare of children of pre-primary school age began to mobilise efforts to form a world organisation associated with UNESCO. As a result, the World Organization for Early Childhood Education

and Care (OMEP) was established at a conference in Prague in 1948. The OMEP grew into an important international organisation with members in more than 70 countries. As a global organisation, OMEP is actively engaged in research and advocacy related to research into early childhood education in order to improve the lives of children. In 1969, OMEP established the *International Journal of Early Childhood*. Since around 2000, early childhood education as a field of scholarship has demonstrated a stellar rise (Moses 2021, p. 2). Another indication of the rise of early childhood on the education research agenda is that in 2022, the journal *Comparative Education* (in terms of citation impact, one of the three highest-rated journals in the field of comparative and international education) hosted a special issue on early childhood education.

Globally, 75% of children were enrolled in pre-primary education in the school year ending in 2019, just before the official primary entry age. However, this statistic highlights global inequality in education: in sub-Saharan Africa and in Northern Africa and Western Asia, the enrollment rate was only approximately 50% (UNESCO 2023b).

In South Africa, pre-primary education has also made a spectacular rise in recent decades. While a comparative analysis of South African education with the global pattern in 1998 identified pre-primary education enrolment ratios as an Achilles' heel in South African education (see Wolhuter 1998), a similar exercise in 2014 showed South Africa to be upon a par with other upper-middle income countries (see Wolhuter 2014). Whereas the gross pre-primary education enrolment ratio in South Africa was reported at 9% in the 1998 study, in the 2014 study, it shot up to 59% (Wolhuter 1998, 2014). However, still 1.3 m South African children aged three to five are not attending any form of early learning programme, and out of all those who do attend only 45% are reaching key milestones (Kahn 2023, p. 3). The importance attached to early childhood education in South Africa in scholarship is evident in the establishment of the *South African Journal of Early Childhood Education* in 2011. The South African government, too, has declared its long-term goal as all children being able to attend at least two years of pre-primary education by 2030, as spelt out in South Africa's National Development Plan 2012. The *Basic Education Law Amendment Act 32 of 2024*, under discussion at the time of writing (May 2023), makes provision for extending compulsory education in South Africa to include one year of compulsory pre-primary education (Naik et al. 2023). In Chapter 5, entitled 'Transforming pedagogical practices in early childhood care and education', Nonzukiso Tyilo and Thobeka Matshoba turn the focus to pedagogical practices in South African early childhood care, and place these within the broader transformation agenda.

□ Leadership

Further to early childhood education, another area that has in recent times been clamoured to as having the potential to make a significant difference in the education supplied by education institutions, and which is also a young but rising field of scholarly activity, is that of *education leadership*.

In 2017, Social Sciences scholar and public media column writer John Kane-Berman, attached to the South African Institute of Race Relations, carried out research at 12 top-scoring schools in the Gauteng province. This group of schools included five no-fee township schools. All 10 of the secondary schools had achieved Grade 12 pass rates of between 93% and 100% in the most recent (2016) round of Grade 12 examinations. In his report, Kane-Berman (2017) reported four pivotal factors explaining success: the presence of committed, competent principals; hard-working teachers; strong parental involvement; and an emphasis on discipline and instilling positive values in learners. This study on South African soil also highlights the value of leadership (the first pivotal factor of success) in the education equation.

Nor can Kane-Berman's findings be regarded as an aberration or exception. The value or significance of leadership in educational institutions has been widely documented. After an extensive review of research on this theme, Leithwood et al. (2004) conclude that leadership is a key explanatory factor in student achievement in schools. The 2005 report on teachers of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) similarly points out the important role teacher leadership plays in the world of today, while in Wales, recent reforms to improve the education system have also highlighted leadership and leadership development as areas in need of attention (Reynolds & McKimm 2021). Not only is educational leadership a rising field of scholarship, but the number of university programmes in educational leadership is growing as well. On South African turf, empirical research has further demonstrated that leadership can make a significant difference in overcoming contextual challenges in the supply of quality education (see Wolhuter, Van Jaarsveld & Challens 2018).

In the still small but growing corpus of scholarly literature on leadership, there are some glaring desiderata. At a time when the dominance, even hegemony of the Global North in the world of scholarly publishing has been pointed out repeatedly (e.g. see Altbach 1982; Inamdar & Kirloskar 2021; Kelly, Altbach & Arnone 1982, p. 518; Lee & Maldonado-Maldonado 2018; Mweru 2010; Nordtveit 2015; Rapple 2020). A survey of the literature on educational leadership programmes too have reported a very uneven structure (in terms of both terrain of study and authorship), favouring the Global North, that asks for rectification (see Wolhuter 2024).

Leadership, and educational leadership in particular, is a concept very difficult to define. Griffiths University (Australia) educational leadership scholar Neil Dempster (2009) developed the following definition:

School leaders, understanding and accommodating the contexts in which they operate, mobilise and work with others to articulate and achieve shared intentions to enhance learning and the lives of learners. (p. 22)

This means that there is a strong connection between leadership and context (see Kissinger 2022). What will be good education leadership in any education institution or setting will depend on the contextual ecology in which that institution is situated. This contextual ecology entails both the education system context and the societal context. The education system context consists of (national and provincial) education policies and legislation, and administrations. The societal context consists of geography, demography, social features and dynamics, economy, politics, and religion and life and world philosophy. The societal context of an educational institution can be pictured as a series of concentric circles stretching from the local community to the national society to the global society (see Klein 2021). Despite the above citation testifying to the significant leverage effect that leadership can make in schools, there is a dearth of such (empirical case study) showcasing and teasing out good leadership strategies and practices in Global South contexts, including South Africa, particularly in deprived rural settings.

□ Education and democracy

One of the noticeable global trends since *circa* 1990 has been that of democratisation. The implosion of the erstwhile East Bloc ignited a wave of democratisation in Eastern Europe, which soon after rolled on to the Global South. Education is widely looked up to entrench a national culture of democracy. Furthermore, parallel to the democratisation trend in society has been the trend to democratise school governance (and to increase decentralisation of education (e.g. see Mwinjuma et al. 2015; Wilkins et al. 2024) and to promote school autonomy (e.g. see Keddie 2016) to chime in with the broader societal trend and with the role of the school to reinforce democracy in society. Both of these trends have been evident in the reconstruction of South African education since 1994: The democratisation of educational governance and the assignment of schools to support the creation of a democratic society and strengthen a new democratic political framework. With recent global trends regarding the regression of democracy (see Lührmann & Lindberg 2019) and the rise of populism (see Biti et al. 2022), this assignment of the school assumes ever greater importance. As two classic studies in comparative and international studies show, the outcome of education promotion democracy is by no means

guaranteed (here Almond & Verba's 1963) five country study comes to mind) nor is it a simple correlation (there are many contextual factors complicating the interrelationship, in Africa in particular, as David Abernethy's (1969) study in Nigeria has shown. In Chapter 6, titled 'Exploring the tension between authority and democratic schooling in South Africa', the authors explore the issue of authority in democratic schooling from the perspective of South African higher education.

■ Contribution to knowledge

The contribution of this chapter is to situate the South African case within the global landscape of national education systems and reform projects. The chapter argues that South Africa faces educational challenges on three fronts: Quantity (expanding access to and participation in education), quality (encompassing all four levels of education quality – input, process, output and product) and the equalisation of educational opportunities. Furthermore, the chapter contends that these challenges are not unique to South Africa but are also faced by education systems worldwide, highlighting the need for international comparative studies, with South Africa serving as one of the cases for comparison.

■ Conclusion

This chapter has analysed and assessed South African education within the framework of the global education expansion and reform project. It was found that, despite high hopes attached in 1994 to education in South Africa, and despite having been accorded an important assignment in bringing about the desired socio-political reconstruction, education in South Africa is facing formidable challenges. These challenges lie in all three aspects of the quantitative expansion of education, education quality and equality in education (see Figure 1.1, Chapter 1). Basic education has not yet been expanded to include everyone. Quality at all levels – input, process, output, and product – remains inadequate. The ideals of equality and equity, however they are defined, have not yet been realised, whether regarding access to education, persistence in education, certification or the societal impact of education. While inequalities related to gender, socio-economic background and racial/ethnic lines have been commendably reduced in recent times, they still affect education. These challenges mirror those faced by humanity globally, in national contexts and jurisdictions around the world. The best approach is to conduct case studies in various contexts and compare them to extract guidelines for shaping education as we move into the 21st century. It is within this framework that the contributions presented in this book should be evaluated, a task that will be undertaken in the next chapter, which concludes this volume.

Chapter 8

Filling the potholes and smoothing the road in order to surge ahead

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■ Abstract

This chapter offers concluding reflections on the volume. A synopsis of the chapters will be provided, reflecting the holistic picture of South African education presented in the first chapter. This conclusion will draw on the findings of each chapter and highlight recommendations for improving practice, as well as suggestions for further research to advance South African education. While the overall impression reaffirms the first chapter's assertion that South African education faces significant challenges, it also emphasises its relevance and instructive value to the outside world. Additionally, South African education can learn much from the experiences of other nations.

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■ Introduction

As the concluding chapter of this volume, the aim is to provide a synopsis of the preceding chapters. This synopsis will present a holistic view of South African education as portrayed in the first chapter. It will summarise the conclusions drawn in each chapter and highlight recommendations for improving practice, as well as recommendations for further research, to advance South African education.

■ Synthesis of chapters of the volume

When the 21st century dawned, a significant feature of the global landscape was the massive education industry that emerged during the 20th century. This can be illustrated by the rise in adult literacy levels worldwide throughout that period. In 1900, at the start of the 20th century, global adult literacy rates were only 20% (Buchholz 2022). By 2000, this figure had increased to 82% (Buchholz 2022). This impressive expansion of global education was first detailed in two books by Philip Coombs (1968, 1985). This educational revolution fostered the development of a new world culture, as explained by David Baker (2014).

South Africa was not an exception to the global education expansion movement of recent decades. In fact, one of the rallying cries and points of mobilisation during the socio-political turmoil leading up to the new political dispensation that began in 1994 was that ‘the doors of learning shall be opened to all’ (South African History Archive 2024). The extent of education expansion in South Africa over the past 50 years is presented in Table 8.1.

This education expansion effort has claimed a substantial portion of the public budget. In the 2021–2022 fiscal year, ZAR431.027 billion, or 20% of the total government budget of ZAR2.184 trillion, was allocated to education, making it the largest single budget item (Kruger 2023). However, this allocation occurs amid other urgent competing demands, such as infrastructure development, health services, housing, poverty alleviation

TABLE 8.1: Growth in enrolments in education institutions in South Africa, 1970–2020.

Year	Primary school	Secondary school	Higher education
1970	3,988,514	**	82,697
1980	4,480,493*	**	**
1990	6,951,777	2,742,105	439,007
2000	7,444,802	4,141,916	**
2010	7,024,368	4,689,500	983,703
2020	7,716,039	5,100,811	1,184,215

Source: Authors' own tabulation of data adapted from UNESCO (2024).

Note: *1981; **(comparable) data (from source) not available.

and police services. Despite this significant investment, South African education faces a multitude of challenges, raising questions about its quality from various sources.

Twenty thousand, or 86%, of public schools in South Africa lack a laboratory and 1,800 do not have a library (Le Cordeur 2023). South Africa has an extremely unequal education system that can be described as two distinct systems. On one hand are the ex-Model C schools, or historically white schools, which are well-endowed with resources and provide high-quality education (Le Cordeur 2023). On the other hand, there are schools that lack even the most basic resources, as evidenced by the earlier figures on laboratories and libraries. Sixty-two per cent of all South African boys grow up without a father in the household (Le Cordeur 2023), which poses a significant challenge given the role families play in supporting educational efforts. Despite relatively high levels of spending on education, South Africa still faces severe problems in this sector. The absence of stable, strong families backing the educational efforts of schools may help explain this discrepancy.

The output quality of South African education is a cause for concern. In the latest round (2021) of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) tests, South African Grade 4 learners ranked last among the 57 participating countries. Their average score was 288 (Mullis et al. 2023). In comparison, the average scores of the other four countries that ranked at the bottom were Brazil (419), Iran (413), Jordan (381) and Egypt (378) (Mullis et al. 2023). By contrast, the top jurisdictions included Singapore (587), Hong Kong (573), Russia (567), England (558) and Finland (549) (Mullis et al. 2023). More concerning is that these tests indicate that 81% of Grade 4 learners in South African schools cannot read with comprehension. The situation is deteriorating; in the previous round of PIRLS tests in 2016, this percentage was 78 (Basson & Hunter 2023, pp. 70, 73). Even more disheartening is the report from the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (OMT) Education Research Report, which found that only 55% of Grade 6 teachers could read at the level expected of Grade 4 learners internationally (Le Roux 2023).

It is not only internal factors within the education system that raise concerns. Like in other countries, the expansion and reform of education in South Africa have been pursued to achieve various external goals and outcomes, including:

- *Economic objectives*: These include the destruction of poverty, the raising of economic productivity and stimulating economic growth.
- *Social objectives*: These are related to the vision of a society free from racial, gender and other forms of discrimination, establishing a socially

mobile society and the dismantling of artificial hierarchies and obstructions in the way of individual progress.

- *Cultural objectives*: These include the empowerment of South Africa's citizens so that they can take part in activities of cultural expression.
- *Political objectives*: These are related to empowering South African citizens to become part of the democratic process of governance, and forging national unity, that is nurturing a common system of values system for a society in which democracy, equality, freedom, peace, justice, tolerance and stability are foundation stone values (Wolhuter 2021).

To focus on one of the previously mentioned points regarding the limited societal impact of education in South Africa (a thorough examination of education's effect on each societal goal would require a separate book), we can consider the nurturing of a culture of democracy. The Afrobarometer survey of 2011 found that 60% of South Africans were 'satisfied with democracy', but this figure fell to 31% by 2023 (Heller 2023, p. 12). It is concerning that in 2023, 72% of South Africans expressed a willingness to forgo elections for non-elected leaders who could reduce crime and increase employment and housing (Heller 2023). In the 2009 general election in South Africa, voter turnout was 77%; this dropped to 66% a decade later, in 2019 (Heller 2023).

In Chapter 1, it was explained that an education system is a complex phenomenon, both in itself and in its interrelationship with a similarly intricate societal context. Additionally, it was noted that South African education faces severe challenges across all dimensions – quantitative, quality and equality. These challenges are not only widespread but also deeply rooted, making the education system so complex that no single volume can thoroughly address all of them. Consequently, the most feasible approach for a scholarly investigation within the scope of one book is to examine a select few of these challenges. This has been accomplished in the chapters of this volume.

■ The parental dimension

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that the high number of children in South Africa growing up without fathers means there is at least one factor present that makes the family factor a particularly acute challenge in South African education. It was Bowles and Gintis (1976) who demonstrated that the quality of education children receive and the outcome of education on their life chances, are much determined by their family backgrounds, much more than in-school factors such as endowment of resources or level of education of teachers. Their classic publication was the trial-blazer of the

paradigm of socio-economic reproduction, which since their pioneer publication has been present very strongly in the social science literature on education, that is, in fields of education scholarship such as sociology of education and comparative and international education. There exists an abundance of evidence as to the beneficial effect for learners, if not an indispensable role, of parental involvement in schools (e.g. see Caricade et al. 2021; Cepada & Grepon 2020; Özgül & Bayindir 2022; Poncelet, Bortalba & Dierendonck 2023).

In Chapter 2, which focuses on parental involvement in schools, the authors explain that this involvement is complex and multifaceted. It encompasses behavioural, cognitive and personal development aspects of children. The authors suggest that Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory can serve as a framework for understanding parental involvement as part of the broader context of how schools operate within society. The authors also introduce Joyce Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres as a theoretical framework that can be used to understand and study parental involvement in schools. Epstein (2019) enumerated six yardsticks of parents' involvement in schools. These are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. The authors then survey factors which can stand in the way of parents being optimally involved in schools. These include the demands of daily life and of eking out a living, inadequate financial resources, low education levels, low self-esteem and erroneous beliefs about school involvement by parents. On the other hand, there are ways by which schools can promote or facilitate parental involvement. These include good systems of communication and nurturing a culture of mutual respect between parents and teachers. It has often been pointed out in research that an Achilles' heel in South African education is poor and inadequate parental involvement in schools (e.g. Khumalo 2023; Myende & Nhlumayo 2022). Inadequate parental involvement in schools has been related to a host of other problems besetting South African schools, including, for example, learner-on-teacher bullying (Adewusi 2021). In an empirical study by Hochfeld, Schmid and Errington (2022), it was found that inadequate parental involvement in schools is one of the reasons that learners in Johannesburg feel unsafe in schools. Chapter 2 has spelled out ways to improve parental involvement in schools, and theoretical frameworks that can be used to devise plans to promote such involvement and that can be used for further research as to how to promote parental involvement in schools in the South African context.

■ The situation in South Africa regarding inclusive education

In Chapter 1, it has been stated that inclusive education is a prerequisite for the attainment of education equality in South Africa and also for the realisation of Goal 4 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Chapter 3, the authors focus on the situation pertaining to inclusive education in South Africa. The authors begin their chapter with a construction of the history of education in South Africa in the era after the end of the Second World War (WWII), contrasting that history with the international development of ideas surrounding education as a human right and eventually the development of the notion of inclusive education, culminating in the *Salamanca Statement* of 1994. Inclusive Education was also embraced in a 2001 South African government *Education White Paper 6: Education of Children with Special Needs*. However, taking the example of the cases of India, Turkey, Ghana and Bangladesh, the authors show how other countries which have also underwritten the principle of inclusive education failed to implement policies of inclusive education. The authors explain that a myriad of contextual factors can render the realisation of the noble ideal of inclusive education difficult. The different (and inadequate) meanings assigned to inclusive education by various stakeholders in education can also present a serious stumbling block.

In the South Africa case, the authors also find a concern-raising gap between policy and reality when it comes to inclusive education. The authors argue that one of the reasons for this is that teacher education fails to prepare and to equip teachers to ensure that children with special education needs are educated according to the ideals of inclusive education. Other obstructions include the inadequate supply of resources to schools and a curriculum which does not enable inclusive education to take place.

■ Integrating information and communication technologies in the teaching of Geography in schools

One of the problems that has historically beset the education sector was the slow uptake of new technology. Institutions and systems of education tend to display a strong inertia in taking advantage of new technology, to the eventual disadvantage of education systems. The same was also the case with the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution of recent decades. Until the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, many institutions and systems of education around the world had not fully embraced ICT. It would be a pity if, after the pandemic, these institutions

reverted to their pre-pandemic practices and failed to benefit from ICT. Therefore, Chapter 4 focuses on the relevance of ICT and the next wave of cutting-edge technology, such as artificial intelligence (including ChatGPT and others), in the teaching and learning of Geography.

The authors link the potential benefits of technology-enhanced education to the pursuit of more equitable education in South Africa. Inequality is often cited as one of the most significant challenges confronting South African education. For instance, learners in the top 200-achieving schools earn more distinctions in mathematics than students in the next 6,600 schools combined (Maggs 2024). The gap in test scores between the top 20% of schools and the remaining 80% is wider than in any other country in the world (Maggs 2024).

■ The problem of authority in democratic schooling: Reflections on South Africa's education system

One of the founding principles of the post-1994 education dispensation has been democratisation. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, maintaining sound learner discipline in South African schools remains an undeniable challenge. The preservation of discipline presupposes the existence of authority and authority structures, which seem difficult to reconcile with the concept of democratic schools. In Chapter 6, the authors attempt to integrate authority and democracy within a unified framework for schools. They propose that the solution lies in schools promoting a form of democratic governance characterised by collaboration and cooperation, rather than a democratic process aimed at advancing personal interests. In this context, the authors assign a pivotal role to educational leadership.

■ The global framework

The South African education system exists not only within a national societal context but also within a global kaleidoscope of various education systems. Chapter 7 presented the South African education system and its expansion and reform within the framework of global educational initiatives. The motivations for the supply and expansion of education, the key aspects of educational reform and the challenges related to quantitative targets, quality and equity are both universal and influenced by the specific contours of national contexts. This highlights the value of comparative studies in exploring educational issues and providing informed, thoughtful suggestions for addressing these challenges.

■ Contribution to knowledge

This chapter synthesises the findings from the other chapters within the overall theme of the book. All chapters confirm the conclusions of the penultimate chapter, highlighting that South Africa faces numerous challenges regarding the quantity, quality and equity of education. There is a pressing need for research on South African education. A pivotal aspect of this research should involve drawing on international experiences while simultaneously enriching the global scholarly corpus with insights from the South African context.

■ Conclusion

Thus, the chapters of this book focus on a selection of critical issues in South African education. The overall conclusion is that South Africa faces a long list of challenges in education across all three dimensions: quantitative (access and participation), quality and equality. In providing scholarly guidance to address these challenges, the experiences of other nations in their education efforts are instructive. At the same time, the South African education experience is particularly poignant and deserving of attention from the international community.

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

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Contemporary issues in South African education is a scholarly volume that critically engages with the evolving challenges in South Africa's education system. Aimed at researchers, academics and postgraduate scholars, the book thoroughly analyses reform imperatives across early childhood, primary, secondary and higher education.

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The book explores the uneven progress of inclusive education and positions higher education institutions as central to national transformation agendas, calling for greater responsiveness to societal needs. Technological integration is examined through the lens of Geography education, highlighting both the potential and limitations of information and communications technologies in a developing country's context. Early childhood education, particularly play-based learning, is addressed through innovative, research-informed pedagogy.

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This volume contributes to broader debates on education reform, policy and practice, situating South Africa's experiences within global frameworks. It is a vital resource for scholars seeking to understand and shape educational change in complex, postcolonial contexts.

**Dr Mari van Wyk, Comprehensive Online Education Services,
Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa**

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While focused on South Africa, several chapters include comparative insights that position local experiences within the global education landscape, making this a valuable case study in international education research. Rather than merely outlining challenges, the book provides evidence-informed recommendations and solutions that enrich scholarly and policy debates. This book serves as an invaluable resource for researchers and scholars involved in education studies.

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Technology Education, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State,
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