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INVITATIONAL DISPOSITIONS OF SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM (SBST) COORDINATORS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EKURHULENI SOUTH DISTRICT

by

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MINI-DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

SBST’s have the explicit aim to be centrally involved in identifying ‘at risk’ learners and addressing barriers to learning. With respect to the school system, early identification of barriers to learning will focus on learners in the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3) who may require support, for example through the adaptation of the curriculum, assessment and instruction according to Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001, p. 33). Furthermore the central purpose of the SBST is to support the teaching and learning process by coordinating all support needed/provided, identify barriers to learning at different levels (learner, educator, curriculum) and drawing in resources needed to address these challenges (SIAS, 2014, p.33)

For any SBST to function optimally, a SBST coordinator’s role is of vital importance as he/she has the overall responsibility in schools to lead and coordinate the SBST, the implementing of White paper 6, the SIAS as well as the SBST policy and coordination of provision for children with barriers to learning. Leading a team requires specific attitudes and beliefs, furthermore learning support in schools require that SBST’s be centrally involved in identifying ‘at risk’ learners and addressing barriers to learning (DoE, 2001), which implies particular attitudes and commitment from SBST’s.

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the current views of the members one selected SBST adhering to self-designed criteria for functioning in a primary school in Ekurhuleni South District opinion regarding the functioning of the SBST and the coordination of the SBST coordinator. The study aimed to interpret these views from an Invitational Dispositional Activity framework (Oldacre, 2012).

The study was explorative, descriptive and contextual and utilised generic qualitative study design. Data collection included literature review, document analysis, a focus group interview, one individual interview, a survey and closed ended sentences. Data was analysed mainly through inductive qualitative content analysis.

The main findings emanating from the study were: that the members are committed to the profession, thus committed to each other and they genuinely want to make a
difference in the children’s lives, thus they share common goals. There is trust and transparency within this group as they feel free to express how they feel in meetings about other educators who are not supporting or completing documents. The findings in this study alluded to a number of important aspects in been visible in a SBST team perceived to be functional. These aspects included:

- Cohesion: collaboration and care, shared responsibility, basic needs being met, trust and transparency, shared goals, commitment and respect, collegial communication and consensus container.
- Empowerment: Members have a voice, they trust, support and share responsibility.

KEY WORDS

Dispositions; School Based Support Team (SBST); Coordinator; Coordination; Invitational dispositions; Cohesion; Care
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Firstly I would like to thank God for giving me the strength, wisdom and courage to fulfil my dreams.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DoE: Department of Education
DBST: District Based Support Team
DBE: Department of Basic Education
ECD: Early Childhood Development
EMIS: Education Management Information System
GDE: Gauteng Department of Education
IDF: Invitational Dispositional Framework
ISS: Inclusion and Special Schools
FSS: Full Service School
LSE: Learner Support Educator
LSEN: Learner with Special Education Needs
SBST: School Based Support Team
SIAS: Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SNA: Support Needs Assessment
NCATE – the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

Dispositions – according to the NCATE glossary, consist of:

the professional ethics, values and commitments that influence behaviours toward learners, colleagues, families, and communities and affect learner’s learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice.
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1 Citation and referencing in this document according to the recommendations as based on the 6th edition (2009) of the APA Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.
SECTION ONE
CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section I aim to state and contextualize the problem and purpose of the study. The context of implementing an Inclusive Education strategy will be problematised with particular attention to the implications of doing so. Secondly, I provide a detailed description of the study’s research design and methodology, including an explanation of the data collection and analysis protocols taken to ensure the study’s validity. Finally, I will outline the ethical procedures followed throughout the study.

1.2 CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

With reference to an Inclusive Education framework within the South African context, the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (Department of Education, 2001) (hereafter referred to as EWP6), proposes that all learners, including learners who have been identified as learners with learning barriers, have a right to be educated with other learners in any mainstream school. The basis for Inclusive Education has been captured in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, published by UNESCO in 1994. This document declares every child’s fundamental right to education and maintains that, because children are unique, education should be designed to take into account diverse characteristics and needs. It goes on to suggest that ordinary schools should be accessible to children with special educational needs and that ‘their learning should be secured through appropriate pedagogy.’ Moreover, it presents inclusive mainstream schools as a means of ‘combating discrimination and achieving education for all in a cost-effective way’ (Maringe & Prew, 2014, p. 212).

In practical terms EWP6 provides guidelines on how Inclusive Education can take place in teaching and learning in schools to ensure the accommodation of learners in an equitable and equal schooling environment. It outlines a national strategy for addressing learning barriers through the establishment of full-service schools and resource centres. The process involves the establishment of a SBST, the identification of all learners with learning barriers and the development of strategies
to support educators to deal with such learners. The aim of Inclusive Education is that all learners, no matter the learning barrier, be taught together with other learners in one classroom. EWP6 requires educators to accommodate all learners with diverse abilities and needs, implying that diverse learners, including learners with intrinsic and extrinsic learning barriers, are accommodated in the same classroom at the same time.

Furthermore, EWP6 refers to different mechanisms for support; for example, the newly introduced Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy that gives clear guidelines for identifying and assisting learners in need of further support. The SIAS policy document is a strategic policy framework for screening, identifying, assessing and supporting all learners who experience barriers within the classroom setting. It can be seen as an extension of the EWP6, and is geared to provide support all the way from the classroom level right through to that of the District Based Support Team (DBST). The strategy is founded on four pillars:

- **Pillar 1** – Early screening and identification for the appropriate placement and learner support. The Support Needs Assessment (SNA) form is used in implementing this pillar
- **Pillar 2** – Educator development and support
- **Pillar 3** – Institutional and management development
- **Pillar 4** – Involvement of stakeholder organisations

The SNA is used to screen learners for learning barriers and to identify possible learning barriers. In addition the SNA is also used as a baseline assessment before referrals are made to the DBST and other stakeholders such as audiologists, occupational therapists and speech therapists, among others. The SIAS (DoE, 2014, p. 5) policy poses critical questions, such as ‘What has been done by the educator to address the barrier?’ and ‘What support does the educator still need in addressing the barriers?’

The main aim of Inclusive Education is to promote and support the development of more inclusive practices in public schools and to foster the increased support of children with learning barriers and other special needs. This means that schools
have had to be restructured as organisations, the curriculum has had to be re-evaluated, and changes have had to take place in pedagogical methodology (Engelbrecht, 1999, p. 25). The South African Schools Act of 1996 (RSA, 1996) gave legislative motivation to Inclusive Education through the following provisions:

- Where it is ‘reasonably practicable’, learners with ‘special education needs’ should be served in the mainstream and relevant support should be provided for these learners – Section 12 (4); and
- Physical amenities at public schools should be made accessible to disabled learners – section 12 (5).

Every mainstream school includes learners with learning barriers and diverse learning needs. Based on the Education Management Information System (EMIS) numbers of 2009, the DBE (2012) reports that nationally there are 102 559 learners with learning barriers in mainstream classrooms. Gauteng has 12 397 learners with learning barriers in mainstream classrooms (Marringe & Prew, 2014, p. 219). One of the main outcomes of the Inclusive Education strategy is to develop Full-Service Schools (FSS) and resource centres which are meant to be an integral part of Inclusive Education.

Full-service schools are specifically selected mainstream schools, which will become examples of good inclusive practice and ‘which will ultimately pave the way for all schools to become inclusive’ (Maringe & Prew, 2014, p. 213). FSS are defined as ‘schools and colleges that will be equipped and supported to provide for the full range of learning needs among all our learners’ (EWP6) (DoE, 2001, p. 22). They should address the multiple issues that profoundly impact learner achievement by including services at the school to provide academic and non-academic support that learners need in order to succeed. Emphasis will thus be placed purely on inclusive principles, which include flexibility in teaching and learning and the provision of education support to all learners and educators. Furthermore, they will be expected to accommodate learners with low to moderate learning barriers. In addition, the first FSS will set the example of what all schools should eventually become – inclusive institutions.
Resource Centres, on the other hand, are special schools which have been made accessible to neighbouring full-service schools because they have the necessary support staff (such as occupational therapists, psychologists and speech and language therapists). Learners with moderate to high learning barriers will continue to be educated in these special schools. It is envisioned in the policy on SIAS (DoE, 2014) that special schools should become part of the support services at the district and eventually serve all schools.

EWP6 and the SIAS policy also refer to the support structures within the system. Firstly, educators identify learners who are at risk and provide interventions to address the support needs for the identified learners. Secondly, the SBST structure is meant to gather further information and to provide further support for those identified learners. And, finally, the DBST structure should respond to the requests made by the SBST and is then required to provide further support (SIAS) (DoE, 2014).

It is therefore clear that SBSTs have the explicit aim to be centrally involved in identifying ‘at risk’ learners and addressing learning barriers, particularly within schools themselves. With regard to the school system, the early identification of learning barriers will focus on learners in the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3) who may require support; for example, through the adaptation of the curriculum, assessment and instruction (EWP6) (DoE, 2001). Furthermore, the central purpose of the SBST is to support the teaching and learning process by coordinating all support needed/provided, identifying learning barriers at different levels (learner, educator, curriculum), and drawing in resources needed to address these challenges (SIAS) (DoE, 2014, p. 33).

According to Voinitchi and Luck (2012, p.151), an important consideration for any team is to function effectively. They state that a well-functioning team firstly makes sure that members understand what the purpose of the team is, and secondly consists of members who are invested in accomplishing the team’s goals. In other words, each member should have a clear understanding of what their goals are but still focus on common objectives to find solutions to a shared problem; members should also know what needs to be done and by whom. Voinitchi and Luck observe that a team brings together people with similar interests and objectives and that
working in a team allows people from different areas with different roles to work together on issues of interest to team members. Group norms for working together are therefore set and seen as standards for all members. They point out, moreover, that decision-making lines are clearly understood and that opportunities for feedback and updating of skills are provided and used by members.

Michan and Roger (2000, p. 203) seem in agreement. They argue that, ‘within a team, individual roles need to be clarified and understood by all.’ They elaborate that further roles should be flexible enough to ‘accommodate individual differences, personal development needs and membership changes.’ A team, they state, also uses formal processes such as facilitated meetings, minutes of meetings etc., to achieve its objectives. A functional team thus creates a context for input from all members, values inputs and provides a space for multiple perspectives to be applied. Individual participation in teams requires self-knowledge, trust, commitment and flexibility (Michan & Roger, 2000, p. 204). The best teams know that the best way to deal with conflict is address the issue directly, quickly, and respectfully. Ilgen (1999, p. 529) states that ‘the emerging consensus is that task conflict is generally unhelpful for teams.’ Everyone on the team should be able to give and receive respectful feedback in order for teams to work effectively; most importantly there has to be an effective leader in order for the team to be functional.

Functional teams, as conceptualized in this study, can thus be defined by the following twelve characteristics. I have chosen for the purposes of this study to adapt these characteristics to form essential criteria for an SBST that functions well within the context of support as outlined in the EWP6 and SIAS documents. These criteria are included in the outline below, after each of the twelve characteristics. The twelve characteristics are:

1.2.1 The group’s basic needs are met; in other words, the group members should feel that the group can understand and manage their basic human needs. For example, members should feel that the group environment meets their levels of comfort, security and safety.
Criterion:

Group coherence, comfort, security and understanding.

1.2.2 There should be mutual trust within the group. Group members should be transparent with one another, which forms trust, and trust is also essential to complete communication.

Criterion:

Mutual trust and transparency.

1.2.3 Communication is important; every member should be “heard” when they are expressing themselves. The group environment should allow free expression of feelings, ideas and thoughts. Communication deepens trust and develops into mutual respect.

Criterion:

Freedom and clarity of dialogic communication.

1.2.4 Group members should always act civilly towards one another and treat each other with the utmost respect.

Criterion:

Civility, respect, care and collegiality.

1.2.5 Commitment to growth; members should be willing to give and receive constructive feedback for the group’s evolution.

Criterion:

Optimism, growth and constructive feedback.

1.2.6 Consensus Container; the individuals in the group should agree upon the operating norms and standards of the group. Members should voice their uncertainty about their roles and responsibilities so as to avoid confusion. This
will enable the group to progress further without any internal unconscious barriers.

**Criterion:**

*Openness, honesty and integrity*

1.2.7 The group should balance the product, process and relationships, i.e. who, what and how.

**Criterion:**

*Commitment to goals*

1.2.8 Shared responsibility; each member knows and understands their roles and responsibilities and how they contribute to the group vision, and each member contributes their fair share of work.

**Criterion:**

*Solidarity and collaborative intent*

1.2.9 Shared leadership; an individual leader may emerge or may not, but still each member plays their part; the leadership role may be played by different people at different times, depending on the situation.

**Criterion:**

*Collaboration, reciprocity and equity*

1.2.10 The group understands the power of consensus decisions; consensus building is motivated by a shared group vision.

**Criterion:**

*Consensus and solidarity*
1.2.11 The group maintains a common goal or vision; a fully functional group following a shared vision produces their best desired results

Criterion:

Commonality in vision and goals

1.2.12 The group meets or exceeds its standard of results; in other words, the group continually checks that it is producing the desired results.

Criterion:

Self-assessment

Adapted from: Davis (selfgrowth.com); Zhang, Hempel and Tsosvold (2007, pp. 1722-1730); and Michan and Roger (2000, pp. 201-206).

In light of the above, I therefore argue that the implementation of EWP6 and the SIAS policy, on which Inclusive Education relies in the South African context, requires well-functioning support structures at institutional and district levels, based on similar characteristics as found in functional teams in general. SBSTs in particular, as the first supportive body in the school, should identify learning barriers as quickly as possible so that barriers can be addressed and the learner can be supported; thereby allowing inclusion to take place. I would argue that this requires SBSTs to function effectively and efficiently in order to identify all learners with intrinsic and extrinsic learning barriers and to develop strategies to support educators to deal with such learners in order for learners to be supported in the same classroom at the same time. Recent studies have shown, however, that SBSTs do not necessarily function as well as they should in the majority of schools in South Africa (Maphula, 2005; Mbata, 2005; Perumal, 2005). These studies show that educators have difficulty in clarifying what constitutes a SBST and how to provide support to learners who are experiencing learning barriers.

The role of the SBST coordinator in this process is of vital importance for this study as I argue that he/she has the overall responsibility and delegated authority in schools to lead and coordinate the SBST, as well as to implement EWP6, the SIAS
policy, the SBST policy, and the coordination of provision for children with learning barriers. In conjunction with the DBST, the coordinator must seek to develop effective ways for the team to support learners who have learning barriers (SIAS) (DoE, 2015, p. 29). The coordinator has to ensure that learners with learning barriers are identified, assessed and supported. They also have to make sure that the appropriate support mechanisms are in place and that the level of the learner support is tracked. The SBST coordinator also advises other staff about LSEN issues and procedures, and has a strategic and training role (SIAS) (DoE, 2014). In leading the SBST toward good functioning, SBST coordinators need to take cognisance that all members of the team, including the coordinators, have unique and personal attitudes and beliefs which tend to influence their behaviour and practice.

Leading a team requires specific attitudes and beliefs. Furthermore, learning support in schools requires that SBSTs be centrally involved in identifying ‘at risk’ learners and addressing learning barriers (DoE, 2001), which implies particular attitudes and commitment from SBSTs.

Much research in Inclusive Education has focused particularly on beliefs and attitudes. Jordan, Schwartz and McGhie-Richmond (2009) studied educators’ beliefs and their effect on how they teach learners with learning barriers; Masango (2013) studied the negative attitudes of primary school SBST coordinators towards learners with special needs; Maphula (2005), Mbata (2005) and Perumal (2010) indicated the value of positive attitudes on keystone characteristics of functional SBSTs in primary schools; Mphahlele (2005) underscores the experiences, attitudes and behaviour of foundation phase educators in reporting challenges to the SBST; and Mtshali (2013) found that educators’ individual attitudes and abilities assisted in dealing with inclusion challenges.

A person’s attitudes and actions are closely connected and often consistent because attitudes and actions influence each other (Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011, p. 1338). According to self-perception theory, actions influence attitudes because people infer their attitudes by observing their own behaviour and the circumstances in which their behaviour occurs. This means that people’s actions and their reflection on these actions may lead them to adopt consistent attitudes when they think superficially.
Thus attitudes can influence behaviour by triggering consistent behaviours directly, with little intervening thought, or they can influence behaviour after deliberate considerations through the formulation of intentions (Wilson, Lindsey & Schooler, 2000). Thus attitudes lead to behaviour, and this behaviour can then lead to certain behaviours being perpetuated due to the need to self-actualise. This process is mostly unintentional and superficial. Only when the behaviour becomes consistent, and after deliberated consideration is intended towards a specific goal, do the attitude and ‘good intentions’ become dispositions. According to Webber (2013, p. 19), a disposition is ‘continuously active, bringing about its outcome only when countervailing pressures are not stronger than the disposition itself in conjunction with any further dispositions that tend towards the same outcome.’

I argue that attitudes and beliefs, although important, extend into more consistent and intentional behaviour, that which Katz and Raths described in 1985 as a ‘disposition’ (Diez, 2007, p. 358).

Oldacre (2012) states that attitudes, values and beliefs make up one’s dispositions. In addition, she believes that these specific dispositions determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Thus, a person’s attitudes, their positive or negative tendencies, or valences, will influence their behaviour in reaction to people, places or occurrences (Oldacre, 2012). Such dispositional behaviour is ‘a pattern of behaviour exhibited frequently and in the absence of coercion, and constituting a habit of mind under some conscious and voluntary control’ (Oldacre, 2012). With consideration to the focus of the present study, the dispositions of the SBST coordinator and the coordinator’s resultant behaviour may therefore be influential in the functioning of an SBST.

It should be noted that although some research has been conducted on the functioning of SBSTs, and on the attitudes and beliefs of educators in general, a dearth of research exists on the attitudes, beliefs and specifically the dispositions of SBST coordinators in leading functional SBSTs. I therefore argue that the particular dispositions of SBST coordinators may be influential in the functioning of an SBST.
1.3 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the previous section I contextualized the study by briefly discussing the policies underpinning learner support in South Africa, with particular attention to EWP6 and learning support, and the SIAS policy as an extension from EWP6. I have indicated that Inclusive Education requires support and a functional SBST measured against suggested characteristics. This support requires excellent coordination and the leadership of a SBST coordinator who embodies particular attitudes, beliefs and possible dispositions.

Oldacre (2012) proposes exploring dispositions from a theoretical framework she coins as an ‘Invitational Disposition Framework’. An Invitational Disposition Framework is guided by five fundamental principles, namely trust, respect, optimism and intentionality, embedded in the central belief of care (Oldacre, 2012). When the framework is implemented consistently and ethically these principles should permeate all behaviour and practices.

In this study, I depart from the notion that in order for SBST coordinators to function as leaders of implementing inclusive policy and processes, they should develop knowledge, skills and dispositions to do so (Melton et al., 2011). Melton et al. (2011) confirm the importance of, and elusiveness of, ‘defining’ dispositions. They argue that dispositions imply certain personality traits on the one hand, but also refer to underpinning values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour on the other. Review of the literature indicates that the latter has been the favoured definition of ‘disposition’ during the last decade. I would argue, with these authors, that disposition informs behaviour (Melton et al., 2011, p. 40) and that one can therefore ‘assess’ disposition by focusing on observable behaviour. Learning support in schools requires the SBST to possess and portray specific skills, knowledge and dispositions to support learners with learning barriers through the development of educator ability and disposition (Naicker, 2005).

The SBST coordinator, as leader and motivator of the team, requires these skills and knowledge, but I argue, above all, the necessary disposition to act intentionally, consistently and ethically to lead the SBST (DoE, 2010). In this study I therefore
propose that if the SBSTs are to successfully support educators in this endeavor, the SBST coordinator as the initiator and driver of the support process should exhibit specific professional dispositions related to the Invitational Dispositions Framework.

As Chief Education Counsellor, in the Inclusion and Special Schools unit (ISS), part of my brief is to train and support the SBSTs in schools to be fully functional in my District. My purpose as an ISS official is to ensure that learning barriers are addressed with support. My three main functions are to:

1. Enable the learning system to accommodate a diversity of learning needs in order to prevent learning breakdown and exclusion;
2. Build the capacity of sites of learning to recognize and address learning barriers and development; and
3. Ensure that learners who require additional support can participate in the best possible process of learning and development (DoE, 2013, p. 65).

As part of my duties, I monitor SBSTs trained at schools, call and attend SBST meetings and provide support using our ISS monitoring tool (Appendix L). Our monitoring tool lists the name of SBST members as well as the roles they play on the SBST. It also monitors the coordinator’s SBST file, master file and resource file. In addition, we monitor how many meetings have taken place and we look at the minutes of those meetings. We also monitor the referral file and the record of referrals to the DBST. In my experience, I have observed that only a minority of SBSTs have coordinator files, resource files, and files of support, updated management plans and minutes of meetings. In addition, only a few of these SBSTs and schools submit quarterly reports, psycho-social surveys, and make referrals to me at the district.

As all schools and SBSTs receive the same training and support from me, I have started to question why only an apparent handful of SBSTs are really functioning according to the stipulated criteria in the ISS monitoring tool (Appendix L). Given the apparent importance of attitudes, beliefs and dispositions, and the importance of consistent and intentional behaviour as previously discussed, I am now questioning how these dispositions, when and if embodied in the coordinator, may influence the
functioning of SBSTs in schools. The coordinator as facilitator of the SBST should be able to act with intentionality and to send out inviting messages (Oldacre, 2012) in order to arrange meetings that allow for the full participation of all members. He or she should also make sure that goals are set and met by the team. In addition, he or she should ensure that all team members understand their roles, as well as collaborate with outside stakeholders. Part of the coordinator’s responsibility is to initiate member’s development (DoE, 2002, p. 10) so as to better support learners and educators. They should, in short, embody the fundamental values embedded in an Invitational Disposition Framework.

The problem this study intends to investigate is:

What are the dispositions, particularly the invitational dispositions, of the SBST coordinator in coordinating a SBST in a mainstream primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District?

In an attempt to resolve this problem, the following specific research questions were formulated:

1. What are SBST members and the coordinator’s current views concerning the functioning and the coordination of a SBST in mainstream primary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District?

2. What dispositions – in particular, invitational dispositions – do SBST coordinators in mainstream primary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District exhibit in their functioning as coordinators?

3. How can SBST coordinators in mainstream primary schools be supported by the district to develop invitational dispositions in the Ekurhuleni South District?

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the dispositions, particularly the invitational dispositions, of a SBST coordinator in the coordination of a SBST perceived to be functional in a mainstream primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District.
As part of the investigation, the study will work towards achieving the following objectives. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Elicit and describe SBST members’ current views and experiences of the functioning and the coordination of a SBST perceived to be functional in a primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District.
2. Explore and describe the dispositions and in particular the invitational dispositions of one SBST coordinator that he/she exhibits in his/her functioning as the SBST coordinator in a SBST perceived to be functional at a primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District.
3. Propose guidelines for district support in developing invitational dispositions for SBST coordinators and in coordinating functional SBSTs to support them in primary schools in the Ekurhuleni South District.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD
As the aim of the study is primarily to describe the dispositions, particularly the invitational dispositions, of a SBST coordinator in the coordination of a SBST perceived to be functional in a mainstream primary school, the study will be explorative, descriptive and contextual in nature. According to Biggam (2015, p. 152) the main function of descriptive studies is to ‘gain a deeper understanding of some phenomenon.’ The study is explorative as Burns and Grove (2001, p. 374) state that explorative research is meant to expand the knowledge of the field of study. In addition, explorative research is conducted to advance insight into a situation, community or individual (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). The current study is contextual as I attempt to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the invitational dispositions of a SBST coordinator in one particular, purposively selected context, namely in one primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District, where I perceive the SBST to be functional.

1.5.1 Research paradigm
I will undertake this study from an interpretivist paradigm. An interpretivist paradigm attempts to focus on the human action aspect of research and sees participation as a product of interpretations, interventions and individual decisions (Tuli, 2011). Through this paradigm, it is understood that the participants and I will be able to
construct understandings together and separately (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Furthermore, this paradigm will enable the findings to come together naturally as the study progresses. Themes should begin to emerge during conversations between myself, the SBST members and the school context in which they are working (Watt, 2007). I will thus attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings that participants assign to them. I am also attempting to find answers to my research question in a naturalistic way as the study unfolds. I hope to find answers in the collaboration between my own, the SBST coordinator’s and the SBST members’ current views on dispositions and, in particular, the invitational dispositions of the coordinator in the functioning and coordinating of the SBST (Watt, 2007). Furthermore I shall attempt to make sense of these interactions from the social constructivist perspective, wherein my knowledge and skills are acknowledged as the result of my experiences and interactions with my context and culture (Siemens, 2014).

1.5.2 Research approach
A qualitative research approach is therefore most appropriate to explore and describe the dispositions, particularly the invitational dispositions, of a SBST coordinator in the coordination of a SBST perceived to be functional (Willig & Strainton-Rogers, 2008). According to Schwandt (2001), qualitative research covers many techniques that try to describe, translate, and somehow come to terms with the meaning of, instead of measuring the frequency of the occurrences in, the social world. In other words, qualitative research works with the text rather than with statistics. A qualitative researcher looks for patterns in data collected to develop common themes or to develop concepts, rather than using data to prove existing theories. I therefore conduct this study from a naturalistic position and attempt to lessen the influence I exert on the situation, thereby developing a complete view of the setting and the people involved (Marshall & Rossman, 2001).

1.5.3 Research Design
I make use of a generic qualitative design in this study as I wish to describe and understand the invitational dispositions of SBST coordinators (Merriam, 1998). Generic qualitative design draws ideas, models and theories from educational,
development or cognitive psychology, which provide the framework for the study; the focus of the study is on understanding an experience or event. Furthermore, the exploration of data uses concepts from the theoretical framework and results in the researcher identifying recurring patterns which help to further outline the theoretical frame. Generic qualitative research must elaborate on the ‘theoretical positioning of the researcher; the congruence between methodology and methods; the strategies to establish rigor; and finally the analytic lens through which the data is examined’ (Caelli, Ray & Mill, 2008).

Since my aim is to explore and describe the dispositions, particularly the invitational dispositions, of a SBST coordinator in the coordination of a SBST perceived to be functional in a mainstream primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District, a generic qualitative design is best suited to my study.

1.5.4 Research methodology

1.5.4.1 Selection of site and participants

As stated earlier, I am a district official in the ISS department at the Ekurhuleni South District office. In a sense, the initial selection of the school district was convenient as I have easy access to and collaboration with the schools in the district. I have been working closely with them for seven years, and I have personally provided training to SBSTs in the schools of the district. Convenience sampling is exactly as the name suggests; it is non-random sampling used as a form of exploratory research that provides insight and ideas that might lead to further research in the future (Biggam, 2015, p. 165).

As the focus of my study is on SBSTs in primary schools that are perceived to be functional, I purposively selected one SBST in a mainstream primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District where I am currently the Chief Education Counsellor in the Inclusion and Special Schools unit. Purposive sampling is used when a researcher is attempting to discover the most about a topic in question, and is used in accordance with the researcher’s judgement (Richie et al., 2013). I purposively selected the SBST using the SBST monitoring tool (Appendix L) as the main criterion. In the Ekurhuleni South District we have a SBST monitoring tool which we use to monitor the functionality of the SBSTs: the ISS monitoring tool (Appendix L). This monitoring
tool allows the researcher to consider members and the roles they play in the SBST, as well as their individual responsibilities. The tool also monitors the availability of the SBST master and resource files. The SBST management plans are also scrutinised to see if the minutes of meetings correlate with the management plan. In addition, a focus on documentation pertaining to the SBST functionality is included, such as policies, circulars and memos. Lastly we monitor the over-age learners and learners with psycho-social barriers to see if the SBST has records of interactions with and support for these learners. I also considered the number of referrals received from the school at the district as well as the quality of the SBST quarterly reports (Appendix U) – in other words, the school that has been selected included the ‘assessment’ of the observations, interactions and documents/intervention it has presented to the DBST (Simons, 2009, p. 34). I used these criteria to select a primary school which demonstrated the characteristics that support inclusive practices such as democratic classrooms where educators adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of the learners; and where the school has adopted a supportive culture and shown committed leadership with regard to referrals to the DBST. The school, in other words, has implemented EWP6 and is starting to implement the SIAS policy.

I purposely chose the foundation phase of the mainstream primary school as this phase is regarded as the critical phase for promoting an interest in education, for identifying and addressing learning barriers at the early stage (Joshua, 2006, p. 10), as well as for the implementation of the SIAS policy. The screening, in accordance with the expectations of the SIAS policy document, focused on Grade R and Grade 1 in my district, and attempted to identify the range of learning barriers and development within the sample.

I initially selected a total of 20 mainstream primary schools from my district which met the criteria I specified. The final selection of one school was based on a convenience sample selection, as I selected a school as close to the district office as possible. This gave me the opportunity for easier access and interaction within the normal workload of servicing all schools in the district as part of my daily work allocation. Importantly, I was able to collect valuable data at this school.
1.5.4.2 Data collection strategies

In accordance with the objective to elicit and describe SBST members’ current views and experiences of the functioning and the coordination of their SBST, a qualitative survey (Appendix E) was developed based on the Educator Dispositions Index (Schulte, Edick, Edwards & Mackiel, 2004), the Invitational Dispositional Framework (Oldacre, 2012) and the Eastern Educators Dispositions Index (Singh & Stoloff, 2007). The rationale for using these indexes to develop the survey was that consistent, reliable and justifiable behaviour (dispositions) would engender good coordination. The survey included closed-ended questions (formulated on a Likert-type semantic scale) and open-ended questions in which participants were required to complete open-ended sentences. Open-ended questions, according to Biggam (2015, p. 183), encourage meaningful responses from participants.

The principal of the selected school distributed the survey and I collected it myself (I have easy access to the school because my job requires me to work with and support the SBSTs within my district). The principal distributed the qualitative survey (Appendix E) to the SBST members and the coordinator and I placed a box in the staff room where the SBST members and coordinator returned their anonymous completed sentences and the completed survey. The box was sealed but a slot on the top was just big enough for respondents to deposit their papers. I collected the box from the school exactly one week later.

Qualitative research allows for the immediate analysis of data as it is collected (Biggam, 2015:162). After the survey data had been collected, the data was analysed preliminarily, which influenced the formulation of the initiating questions for the focus group interview (Appendix I). This interview was conducted with the entire SBST to also elicit and describe members’ current views and experiences of the functioning and coordination of the SBST (Rapley, 2001, p. 309). The single question formulated for the group interview was: ‘What is it like for you to be part of this SBST at this specific school?’ Interviewing different members of the SBST allowed me to cross-compare the responses (Biggam 2015, p. 184). A second data collection opportunity to elicit information aligned with this objective was one in-depth individual interview that I conducted with the coordinator; wherein the questions formulated were initiated based on the initial analysis of the focus group interview (Appendix J).
All conducted interviews were scheduled according to the participants’ convenience in terms of time and place. Interviews were audiotaped and were transcribed verbatim (Appendix K) to ensure the analysis of data was based upon an accurate transcript and to allow me to concentrate on the interview (Biggam, 2015, p. 184). The participants were requested to read the transcription verbatim and to validate its accuracy (Member checking; Appendix S). The advantage of the interview is to allow the researcher to ‘explore interviewee responses and get at the root of issues’ (Biggam, 2015). Biggam (2015, p. 183) observes that an interview is a conversation between two people with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the participant. In this study, using interviews provided me the opportunity to explore and describe the members’ views and experiences regarding the functioning and coordination of their SBST. Furthermore, the interviews have elicited additional data which have provided insight into possible dispositional behaviour that the coordinator exhibits in her functioning as coordinator.

Documents are a valuable source to support findings made through other research methods like interviews (Appendix I and J) and observations (Appendix G) (Best & Kahn, 2003, p. 201). Thus documents such as the minutes of SBST meetings (Appendix R), management plans (Appendix T), the SBST monitoring tool (Appendix L), pictures (Appendix Q), journal notes (Appendix P) and psychosocial quarterly stats (Appendix U) were also used to collect information regarding coordination and supplemented data collected to address this first research objective.

An observation tool (Appendix G) based on the Invitational Dispositions Framework was used during one SBST meeting to observe the coordinator. The collection of this data relates to the second objective of my study, which is to describe the dispositions and, in particular, the invitational dispositions the SBST coordinator exhibits in her functioning as coordinator. I also took detailed field notes (Appendix P), which recorded interactions, behaviours and discussions during my engagement with the SBST coordinator (Creswell, 2007) in an effort to gain an understanding of the dispositions exhibited in these interactions. Field notes are important tools for the qualitative researcher and not just a mere summary of events but detailed reproductions of what had occurred and was observed (De Vos et al., 1998, p. 285; Glartthorn, 1998, p. 173).
In summary, the data collection process for this study is visually presented in Figure 1.5.

**Figure 1.5 Phases of data collection**

1.5.4.3 Analysis of the data

Content analysis seeks to analyse data within a specific context in view of its meanings and is used to ensure that all units of the analysis receive equal treatment and that the process is objective (Krippendorff, 2012). By working through all the data and then dividing the data into smaller meaningful units (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p. 127), qualitative analysis of the data could take place. The data in this study was thus analysed by means of thematic content analysis techniques. Thematic content analysis entails identifying patterns across the data collected to provide an answer to the research question. In this study, patterns were identified through familiarising myself with the data, then coding the data so that themes could start emerging across data-sets (McLeod, 2008).

I have chosen to use inductive content analysis. This process has included open coding, creating categories and abstraction. Open coding implies the systematic reading, re-reading, and notation of patterns in the data and the grouping of these patterns to form conceptualised codes (by making notes and wrote headings in the
text whilst I read it. I then read through the text again and put headings in the margins to describe all the aspects of the content - Appendix I). After completion of the formulation of possible initial codes, the process was repeated in an attempt to ratify the codes. After I had identified the codes I then proceeded to categorise and group the codes in an attempt to find common themes in the data. To achieve this I coded the open-ended sentences and the survey (Appendix E); coded the transcribed interviews to identify opinions and experiences relating to the functioning and coordination of a SBST (Appendix I); and coded the in-depth individual relating to her opinion and views regarding her coordination of the SBST (Appendix J). Throughout the process raw data from data sources was analysed to identify common themes. The themes were derived from coded categories where related codes were grouped together. Interrelated codes were then used to interpret the data and draw conclusions (Merriam, 1998).

Elo and Kyngas (2008) state that the dialogue between co-researchers is of value as together they agree in which way to label data. A qualitative researcher during the research process is advised to seek support from their supervisors (Anney, 2014). Feedback from my supervisor improved the quality of my findings; I therefore obtained the insights of my supervisor in developing the conclusion to my study.

1.6 ISSUES OF VERIFICATION OF DATA AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) model of trustworthiness is important to this study. Lincoln and Guba identified four measures to ensure trustworthiness, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. De Vos, Strydom, and Fouché (2005) argue that credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are the norms or criteria of trustworthiness to which all research must answer, and against which all research can be evaluated.

1.6.1. Credibility
Credibility refers to the amount of faith the researcher has in the findings, based on the research design, participants and the context in which the study was conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As stated previously, I am employed at district level and as such, my position as district official might have influenced not only my interpretation of the data, but also the manner in which the participants responded to me. In order
to eliminate this possible researcher bias, I used the triangulation of data sources, such as observations and interviews with members and the coordinator, to increase my confidence in my descriptions. I then observed one of the SBST meetings, paying attention to the interactions between the coordinator and the members. I collected data during each school visit through observation and journal notes to ensure consistency. My aim was to leave an audit trail as a pathway of decisions that would reveal the data analysis process (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2013, p. 509). To ensure trustworthiness of the data collected, I also kept a detailed audit trail providing records of research activities such as interviews, transcripts, initial coding and conceptualisations of findings (Creswell, 2007) from the start of the research study to allow for research transparency. To further ensure trustworthiness and elimination of possible bias, I made use of peer debriefing in the form of constant supervision to ensure that I was never biased nor making assumptions about the data. I also utilised member checking of raw data to ensure that the data was an accurate representation of the coordinator's views and opinions. I interacted regularly with the participants, in their environments, which also improved the correctness of the data (Watson, 2011), and checks were done with the participants in order to ensure that what they had said in their interviews (Appendix O) was understood and correctly recorded (Mirriam, 1998, p. 204).

1.6.2. Transferability
Anney (2014) describes transferability as the ‘degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents’. Similarly, De Vos et al. (2002) describe a qualitative study’s transferability as the degree to which the findings can be applied to other settings. I have attempted to achieve transferability through ‘thick descriptions’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which provide detailed accounts of what the participants said, taking the context in which they made their statements into consideration. Elo and Kyngas (2008) argue that, in order to facilitate transferability, ‘the researcher should give a clear description of the context, selection and characteristics of participants, data collection and the process of analysis.’ Accordingly, I have provided a thick description of the research methodology in order to achieve transferability and to make it possible for the reader to attain as much meaning from what has been read as possible. According to Anney
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(2014), a thick description helps other researchers to imitate the study under similar conditions in other settings.

1.6.3. Dependability
According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability refers to the extent to which the findings would be consistent if research was done in other similar contexts. I have explained the design and conceptualisation of the data collection instruments in detail, discussed the data collection and analysis process comprehensively, and also included the actual data collection instruments as addenda. I have done this because I believe that similar research using similar instruments, but conducted in a different context, may lead to consistency in the research overall. In addition to Lincoln and Guba’s definition, Shank (2006) describes dependability as the ability to know where the data in a study comes from and how it was collected. I have thus interviewed the SBST members to elicit their views and opinions of the coordination as well as the SBST coordinator’s views and opinions regarding coordination. In addition, Anney (2014) states that dependability includes participants evaluating the findings, the interpretation and the recommendations of the study to ensure that they are all supported by the data received from the participants. I therefore asked the members of the SBST to check and verify my interpretation, findings and recommendations.

1.6.4. Confirmability
Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that confirmability is reached when the truth value and the applicability of data is established. According to De Vos et al. (2005) confirmability refers to the concept of objectivity. Chenail (2011) argues that the researcher as instrument can be the greatest threat to trustworthiness. Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) as cited in Chenail (2011, p. 257) suggest the potential reasons for this bias can include the degree of affinity researchers have with the population under study, including researchers being a member of the group themselves. The fact that I am a District official may have been an aspect which could potentially influence the confirmability of the study, but researcher bias was limited by attending supervision regularly and member checking. To ensure the need highlighted by the authors above, I have used different resources in my literature review. My findings
were also given to my supervisor for peer checking and to the participants for verification before analysis.

In addition, all interactions with the school were focused on the SBST. No social interaction or personal relationships evolved. Furthermore, the participants took part freely in the research project and all ethical procedures were implemented, namely: confidentiality, privacy, anonymity and informed consent, all of which has been described above. Consistency and transparency is manifested clearly in the argument, in the fit between theory and method, the transparent methods and data presentation, and my reflections in my journal (Mertler & Charles, 2005, p. 18).

1.7 COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Ethics is a set of moral principles that is suggested by a group or individual (De Vos et al. 2002). In order to comply with the ethics of the Education and Psychology research communities, the following ethical conditions were observed in conducting this study:

- Approval for this study was granted by the Faculty of Education higher degrees committee and the ethics committee of the University of Johannesburg. Ethical clearance. (Appendix B).
- Permission was granted from the Gauteng Department of Education, Head office (Appendix A).
- Permission was then granted by the principal of the school, for research to be conducted at the school (Appendix M).
- I contacted the SBST coordinator and explained the research to her; she then agreed to participate in the research (Appendix C).
- SBST members gave their approval to be part of the research (Appendix D).
- Participation in this study was completely voluntary and participants were given the right to withdraw at any time (Hendricks, 2006; Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 1997).
- Anonymity has ensured confidentiality and all names have been changed to protect the participants and ensure privacy at all times (Haslam & McGarty, 2003, p. 384).
• Great care was taken to ensure that no harm would come to the participants for choosing to participate in this study in any way, and apart from gleaning a deeper understanding of how the coordination of their particular SBST functioned, no other benefits for participating in the study were devised.

• The principal, the coordinator and the members of the SBST would receive a complete copy of my report at the completion of the assessment process thereof.

• After the mini-dissertation has been examined successfully, findings will be made available at a suitable forum for the SBST, DBST, ISS unit and head office, and published for a wider audience.

• It is also important to note that my data was gathered at a time convenient for the participants so that academic activities and their functioning as a SBST were not compromised in any manner at all.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE SECTIONS

The first section has provided the introduction and background to the problem, the conceptualisation of the problem, and the aim of the study. The research design and methodology has been extensively discussed.

The second section will focus on the literature review and will depart from the Invitational Disposition Framework (IDF) as a conceptual framework (Oldacre, 2012) to explore the invitational dispositions of SBST coordinators.

The third section will present the findings of the research undertaken and will contain a detailed analysis of these findings as well as an outline of emergent themes.

The final section will discuss the summary of my findings, the conclusions drawn and the recommendations made for practice and further research. In addition, it will discuss the strengths and limitations of the study.
SECTION 2

CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section I will briefly define Inclusive Education and discuss its values and framework. Thereafter, in detail, I will define the roles and responsibilities of the School Based Support Team (SBST) and the District Based Support Team (DBST) in achieving the goals of inclusion and learning support in order for children to succeed. In particular, I will discuss the role and responsibilities of SBST coordinators in coordinating a successful SBST. Furthermore, this section will elaborate on dispositional theory and the importance of disposition in teaching and Inclusive Education. It will also further elucidate the concept of invitational dispositions, essential to the conceptual theoretical framework of the study. I will, moreover, attempt to extrapolate the dispositions necessary for the appropriate support to learners in inclusive settings. Most importantly, I will focus on the invitational dispositions most appropriate to SBST coordinators.

2.2 INCLUSION AND LEARNING SUPPORT

Inclusion in education is based on the fundamental values of equality, quality, equity and social justice (Booth et al., 2003). These values are particularly relevant for the South African context given the injustices and inequities of the past. Inclusive Education departs from very specific and fundamental values and emphasis is placed on the ‘system meeting the needs of the child as normally and inclusively as possible’ (Luger et al., 2012). Thus, rather than the child being excluded, the education system changes to accommodate, include and support the child. Inclusion, then, is fundamentally about the rights of the child. The child with a learning barrier has the right to be educated and to have their individual needs met within the general classroom. The values of inclusion require a system in which all children are accommodated in the inclusive classroom. As discussed in Section 1, the EWP6 (DoE, 2001) requires educators to accommodate all learners with learning barriers, which implies that all learners with a broad range of abilities and needs should be accommodated together. Inclusive Education is therefore the entitlement of all
children and young people who have a right to quality education, irrespective of their differences or learning barriers.

A UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education was held in Spain in 1994, and it was here that the principles of Inclusive Education were adopted (Armstrong, 2008). At the Conference, a framework for action was developed and this framework advises that all schools should ‘accommodate all children, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions’ (The Salamanca Statement, 1994). This implies that all schools need to actively promote equal and equitable educational opportunities by ensuring access for all learners, including those with learning barriers. Engelbrecht et al. (1999, p. 9) state that ‘inclusion is a right, a right which appears to be universal, seeing the creation of inclusive schools as part of the creation of an inclusive society.’

Masango (2013) states that an inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, is accepted and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met. Masango explains that inclusive classrooms should work towards creating and maintaining an environment in which all learners can feel a sense of identity, that they belong and that they are supported. For instance, support should start in the mainstream classroom, then involve the School Based Support Team (SBST), and only then should the learner be referred to the District Based Support Team (DBST) for further intervention if necessary. Masango voices one of the fundamental ideas outlined in the EWP6 (2001, p. 16), namely that Inclusive Education is about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula, and the environment to meet the diverse abilities and needs of the learners (Mahlo, 2013).

The South African education landscape supports inclusion as shown in the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (DoE, 2008), a document which focuses on all learners in all settings who need support – not only on learners with physical disabilities but learners with learning barriers (DoE, 2005, p. 3). This document stems from the EWP6 (DoE, 2001, p. 17) and focuses on ‘overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs’ by identifying learners and establishing a support package to address the needs. It further outlines the role of educators (especially in the
Foundation Phase), parents, managers and the SBST within the new framework of how support should be structured. The educator’s role is to identify learners experiencing barriers as early as possible within their phase and provide necessary support, observing them carefully in all learning areas so that necessary adaptations and referrals can be made. The SIAS policy gives clear guidelines of which learners could be in need of further support. It also phrases some important questions, like ‘what curriculum interventions have you as teacher implemented to address your concerns?’ (SNA) (DoE, 2008, p. 4), and ‘What support does the educator still need in addressing the barriers?’ The SIAS policy provides a strategic policy framework for screening, identifying, assessing and supporting all learners who experience barriers within the classroom setting. It is aimed at assisting educators to identify learning barriers and to support those learners. Moreover, it outlines the protocol that has to be followed when identification has taken place. EWP6 (DoE, 2001, p. 55) states that in order for the Inclusive model to work, designated posts should be created in all schools for the development and coordination of school-based support for educators. The SIAS document further identifies the responsibilities of the SBSTs as well as the DBST in addressing these barriers so that all learners can be provided with support (SIAS) (DoE, 2014).

It becomes abundantly clear from these ‘directional’ official documents that the establishment of an Inclusive Education and Training System will require changes to be made in mainstream education so that all learners experiencing learning barriers can be identified early on to receive the appropriate support and experience quality education (DoE, 2001, p. 24). EWP6 (DoE, 2001, p. 48) affirms that specific teams will be put in place, and that ‘[t]he primary function of these teams will be to put in place properly co-ordinated learner and educator support services that will support the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs.’ The policies and legislation give us guidelines for the specific support structures that need to be in place, such as SBSTs and DBSTs, and guides us on the different levels of support needed, which I will elaborate on below.

2.3 THE DISTRICT BASED SUPPORT TEAM

The Glossary in the Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools (DoE, 2010, p. 49) defines the District Based Support Teams (DBSTs) as ‘groups of departmental
professionals whose responsibility it is to promote Inclusive Education through training, curriculum delivery, distribution of resources, identifying and addressing learning barriers, leadership and general management.

EWP6 proposes an integrated community-based model of support provisioning. This involves all support staff from the district office. The DBST should consist of all circuit managers, heads of all sections in the district (such as Governance and Management, Physical Infrastructure, Quality Assurance, Human Resources, Assessment/Exams, Curriculum, and the Inclusion and Special Schools unit). Other relevant professionals from outside departments and intersectoral partners can be co-opted and asked to attend meetings where necessary. Staff from full-service schools, and social and health officials can also be invited to attend the DBST meeting to offer valuable input to promote inclusion (SNA) (DoE, 2008).

The core responsibilities of the DBST are to review the action plan of the SBST and use the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) form 3 (DoE, 2014), which indicates what support has been provided by the SBST and acts as a guide for the consideration of further support. The DBST is further required to assist the SBSTs to access support programmes and to address additional support needs where needed as well as to investigate and recommend learners requiring placement to special schools for extra support. Furthermore, the DBST is responsible for monitoring, tracking and verifying SIAS recommendations and decisions by analysing assessments and school referrals as well as processing SBST requests for further interventions and support within the SIAS framework (SIAS) (DoE, 2008, p. 103).

In addition, the DBST should build cooperative relationships with outside stakeholders, such as the Health Department, and budget for additional resources to ensure the effective implementation of the inclusion strategy (SIAS) (DoE, 2014, p. 29). The DBST should not only provide support for learners but also provide additional support for parents as well as educators and refer educators for psycho-social support (DoE, 2008, p. 102).

According to the SIAS policy document (DoE, 2008, pp. 104-105), the DBST has four focus areas. These focus areas are:
• Classroom-based support

This involves the training of educators as well as SBSTs via a process of consultation and mentoring. The planning and monitoring of the assessment of learner needs, as well as the planning and monitoring of support programmes for identified learners should be implemented by the DBST. Another core function is the continuous monitoring and implementation of guidelines for curriculum differentiation, as well as putting support programmes in place for identified learners requiring additional support. In addition, the DBST should be involved in developing Learner and Teacher Support Material (LTSM) and the provisioning of the LTSM.

• Institutional support

The DBST should assist in the development of school policies that promote Inclusive Education and minimise exclusion. This would include managing enrolments and admissions not only into mainstream schools but also into special schools, full-service schools and resource centres. DBSTs should assist in the development of parents and school governing bodies. In addition, they should monitor assessment and promotions and be involved in the development of curriculum leadership. Finally the DBST should assist in managing LTSM budgets and monitoring the LTSM development as well as the supply of resources.

• Administrative support

DBSTs should supply personnel with training and support, as well as training in financial management. They should be involved in supporting the curriculum via the administration of assessment and the provisioning of assistive devices and, lastly, they should also manage the physical facilities at schools.

• Psycho-social, environmental and health support

The DBST should develop strategies for schools, SBSTs and educators on whole school development and classroom support as well as implement programmes for HIV and AIDS. It is advised that the DBST also provide
‘training, counselling and mentoring of educators and parents/legal caregivers’ (DoE, 2014, p. 31). Monitoring the development and the implementation of prevention and intervention programmes to learners should also be a focus. The DBST should coordinate at the inter-sectorial level of all support services and intervention programmes which address learning barriers and development, and develop networks for social support and counselling. In addition, it should develop enabling environments through capacity building by promoting health and safety, including child justice, support for street children and the prevention of child labour. Finally the DBST should develop, implement and monitor guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes and develop LTSM to address specific barriers.

2.4 THE SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM (SBST)

Every school should establish a School Based Support Team (SBST), the primary function of which is to put in place properly coordinated learner and educator support services, notably identifying and addressing learner, educator and school needs (DoE, 2002, p. 46). The EWP6 (DoE, 2001, p. 19) states that the main function of the SBST is to support all learners, educators and the system as a whole, so that learners’ needs can be met. Therefore the primary function of this team would be to ensure support services are properly coordinated and offered to the school.

The focus of the SBST coordinators should be on teaching and learning factors and emphasis should be placed on the development of strategies that will be of benefit to all learners, on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs, and on the adaptation of support systems available in the classroom. Therefore one of the leading purposes of the SBST is in accordance with the policy of inclusion (EWP6, 2001); namely, to foster the development of effective teaching and learning in schools, primarily through early identification and addressing learning barriers at all levels of the system.

A particular process for support at institutional level is proposed in the EWP6 (DoE, 2001, p. 29). According to this process, identification, planning and implementation of support starts with educators being required to identify and address learners’ barriers. If the problems persist after the educator has provided support then the learner should be referred to the SBST. The SBST supports the teaching and
learning process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and school needs, gathering information and organising information sessions on inclusion. It also establishes partnerships with parents and community-based services.

The *Guidelines for Full-Service Schools* (DoE, 2010, p. 49) defines SBSTs as ‘teams established by institutions in general, further and higher education, as an institution-level support mechanism that’s primary function is to put in place co-ordinated school, learner and educator support services.’ The EWP6, and the SIAS document, has suggested that the SBST should be a support structure in schools that is supported by the DBST. The SBST should focus on the screening, identification and support of learners who need further intervention in order to be successful and to maximise their potential.

The SBST plans support for the learner, educator and school and is aligned to the Whole School Development Plan. The School Management Team (SMT) is the legislatively mandated structure that ensures proper management and leadership within schools, consisting of subject heads, heads of department, the deputy principal and principal. It is advisable that the SMT should be represented and serve on the SBST (SIAS) (DoE, 2008, p. 88). The constitution of the SBST is proposed in the EWP6 (DoE, 2001, p. 33) and is explained further in the *Training Course on the Guidelines for Full Service/Inclusive Schools* (2014, p. 54) wherein it is suggested that the SBST be chaired by the principal. The team should consist of all SMT members and educators who are interested in joining it. Educators with specialised skills and knowledge in areas such as learning support, life skills or counselling should also be drawn into the SBST as well as non-educator staff such as administrators or care-taking staff who would be of value to the team (SIAS) (DoE, 2014, p. 33). Sethosa (2001, p. 10) argues that the SBST should comprise a team of educators whose focus and functions are to develop and empower educators in identifying learning difficulties, intervention and preventative strategies. Where necessary, other relevant professionals or organisations can be co-opted, such as officials from the Department of Health and Social Development, members of local government, or the South African Police Service (DBE, 2014, p. 54).

In conclusion, it is the principal’s responsibility to establish the SBST and ensure that the team is functional and supported. In addition, the SMT as well as educators
specialising in areas such as learning support, life skills or counselling should be encouraged to join the team. Nowhere is there mention of who should coordinate the team.

2.4.1 The role of the SBST

It is clear in the SIAS policy (DoE, 2014, p. 31) that the role of the SBST is to develop the school as an inclusive centre of learning, care and support by identifying learning barriers early on and determining who will require support. The key to preventing barriers from occurring is the effective meeting and monitoring of the different needs amongst learners within the system as a whole. In other words, SBSTs should be centrally involved in identifying ‘at risk’ learners who experience learning barriers, and in minimizing those barriers (DoE, 2014, p. 32).

A vital function of the SBST, in order to minimise learning barriers and to determine the level of support needed, is to coordinate support services. To do so, the educator’s report on identified learning barriers should be studied, as well as the impact the support has had on the learner (SIAS) (DoE, 2008, p. 87). The SBST must therefore manage and coordinate the way in which educators address the barriers experienced by individual learners, and work with educators to offer support programmes to meet individual learners’ unique sets of learning barriers. SBSTs should also provide training to educators regarding the prevention of the development of barriers and should identify learners at risk (SIAS), (DoE 2008, p. 88).

The SBST should not only provide support but should also coordinate the learning and teaching process by identifying learner, educator and school support needs. In addition, it should assess the support needed as well as develop and monitor a programme for the educator and the parents (SIAS) (DoE, 2014, p. 32). The active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning experience is central for effective learning and development. Parents of learners who experience learning barriers should always be part of the intervention process (SIAS) (DoE, 2014, p. 36). Moreover, it is vital that the SBST coordinates the necessary support needed, such as physical resources or professional support from within and outside of the school, to address challenges and network with outside stakeholders such as child welfare (SIAS) (DoE, 2014, p. 33). The SBST should also proactively identify positive
conditions that need to be in place for supportive teaching and learning to take place, such as referring learners to learner support educators or remedial therapists.

The actions outlined above are determined by the SIAS process, indicating that identifying support needs and providing support at learner, educator or school level is of the utmost importance. In each case the SBST has to provide intervention and support before additional external support can be requested (DoE, 2008, p. 87). The Support Needs Assessment (SNA) form 2 guides the SBST. If a learner is referred, a review of the barrier identified as well as the interventions that would need to be applied should take place. This should be followed by the construction and implementation of a plan of action, allowing the SBST to provide support. Only if the support plan has been followed through and little progress has been made should the SBST coordinator refer to DBST (SIAS) (DoE, 2014, p. 32).

The SBST is expected to keep a register of all learners who require additional support. This register would include learners on the feeding scheme, learners referred for psycho-social support and learners referred to DBST for LSEN numbers or alternate placement. The SBST is expected to keep learner profiles up to date by noting all means of support, including the SIAS documents (SIAS) (DoE, 2008, p. 38). Records of all interventions should be kept, whether it is for learning support or for psycho-social support, as well as records of meetings with parents. SBSTs should have regular meetings to discuss support and referrals. At each meeting, members should provide a summary of activities, approval for out-of-school interventions and support monitored (SIAS), (DoE, 2008). Moreover, meetings should focus on developing strategies to address learner needs and learning barriers; these strategies should include educator development programmes, parent consultation, and support as addressed in the SIAS (DoE, 2008, p. 88). Records of all requests for outside assistance, such as arranging drug counselling with SANCA, should be kept for future reference.

2.4.2 The role of the support coordinator

The coordination of any team such as the SBST, which is highly interactive, integrated and collaborative, will require specific and special knowledge, skills and abilities. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), school leaders do not just impose
goals on followers but ‘work with others to create a shared sense of purpose and direction.’ Leaders, they elaborate, set directions by:

- Identifying and articulating a vision
- Creating shared meanings
- Creating high performance expectations
- Fostering the acceptance of group goals
- Monitoring organisational performance, and
- Communicating (they frame issues in ways that will lead to productive decision making)

According to the SIAS policy, the SBST coordinator acts as the ‘strategic leader’ of the team within the school, but should also negotiate with the SMT and other members of the team (DoE, 2014, p.32). Research suggests that coordinators in schools can assist educators to embrace goals, to understand the changes that are needed to strengthen teaching and learning, and to work together towards improving education (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). As a strategic leader, the coordinator should also develop strong networks with external sources of support, which may include the Health Department, the Department of Social Development, Early Childhood Development (ECD), service providers and special schools/resource centres (SIAS) (DoE, 2014, p. 34). As facilitator of the SBST, the coordinator should be able to act with intentionality and to send out inviting messages (Oldacre, 2012) in order to arrange meetings that allow for the full participation of all members. The coordinator should also make sure that goals are set and met by the team. He or she should promote cooperation and ensure that all team members understand their roles in working toward common goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Part of the coordinators responsibility is to initiate members’ development (DoE, 2002, p. 10) to better support learners and educators. In practical terms, the coordinator must be a key component in the successful implementation of an Inclusive Education support system by:

- Keeping a record/register of learners identified and those needing and receiving support
• Inviting relevant stakeholders to meetings, liaising with them, and being optimistic

• Keeping track of cases that are receiving outside support

• Recording all educators’ requests or referrals to the SBST, and monitoring the support providedimplemented by the educators (DoE, 2008, p. 87)

• Checking records daily to see if there are any new referrals or referrals needing urgent attention

• Immediately processing urgent requests such as suicide threats or abuse

• Regularly reporting to the District Based Support Team for further interventions or for assistance and support.


Existing research on the roles and responsibilities of SBST coordinators places much emphasis on managerial and administrative tasks and very little on the skills, attitudes and dispositions a coordinator should have.

For example, a study completed in the Netherlands by Pijl and De Bos (2001) describes the support coordinator’s role as one of calling team meetings to discuss the instruction of special needs learners, supporting the classroom educators, collecting and offering specialised learning materials, and performing and arranging assessment, amongst other duties. From their study it is obvious that the support coordinator has a central role in enacting changes in meeting learners’ special needs in the regular education system. ‘Support coordinator’ appears to be a new term in the Netherlands; this would explain why so little is known about support coordinators’ working conditions, roles and responsibilities. Research, based mainly on interviews with cluster coordinators, has shown that schools differ in the use of and the tasks given to support coordinators, who vary from individually working with learners to supporting educators; being responsible for the education of learners with barriers to operating in a cluster network of support coordinators. The introduction of the support coordinator’s role in schools in the Netherlands is based on a move away
from learner-centred support to also supporting the classroom educator. The coordinator is expected to support the educator by conducting assessments, referring learners to outside stakeholders for support and writing Individual Education Support Plans for the learners. In my opinion, the role of support coordinators in the Netherlands is mainly administrative and there is no mention of the attitudes or dispositions that the coordinators should possess.

2.4.3 Coordination skills

In order to determine what skills are needed to coordinate it is important to define the term coordinator. According to the Macmillan dictionary, a coordinator is ‘someone whose job it is to organise the various parts of an activity and make sure that all the people involved work well together’ (Macmillan Dictionary, 2015). In addition, the Cambridge dictionary defines a coordinator as ‘someone whose job it is to make different groups work together in an organized way to achieve something’ (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Stringer, Stow, Powel, and Low (1992, p. 93) indicate that a coordinator should display intrapersonal skills such as being an effective listener and being supportive towards fellow members. They argue, moreover, that interpersonal skills are just as important as they relate to the relationship between the coordinator and his/her team members. Examples of good interpersonal skills include rapport building and communication skills (Stringer et al., 1992, p. 95).

As the leader of the SBST the coordinator should also anticipate the development of team skills such as a common purpose, cooperative problem solving and the coordination of activities (Elliot & Sheridon, 1992, p. 325). Heredero, Haider and Martinez (2015) provide valuable insight when they state that ‘shared knowledge, shared goals and mutual respect are the relationship dimensions, while frequent, timely, accurate, and problem-solving communications are the communication dimensions of relational coordination.’ Coordination, however, presupposes cooperation and collaboration as prerequisites for the development and functioning of teams, particularly within the context of organised schooling.
2.4.3.1 Coordination

Quinn and Dutton (2005), as cited in Lemmetyinen (2014, p. 14), define coordination as ‘the process of arranging activities, the process people use to create, adapt and re-create organizations.’ Malone and Crowston’s (1990) definition of coordination emphasises interdependence; they state that ‘if there is no interdependence, there is nothing to coordinate.’ They also refer to an interesting theory called ‘coordination theory’ and define it as ‘a body of principles about how activities can be coordinated’; in other words how people can work together ‘harmoniously.’ When they refer to the word ‘harmoniously’ they include conflict as well as cooperation in their understanding of how to achieve the best outcome or reach a common goal. Furthermore, they detail the importance of group decisions and how these decisions require members of the group to communicate about the goals that need to be achieved, the alternative decisions that need to be made, and finally the choices that are made. Decker and Lesser (1993) argue that, in order to build a model of coordination, the agents should share a common language for communicating results, as well as other information such as the abstract goals needed for coordination. There would therefore have to be a common goal within the SBST: to address learning barriers in order for members to cooperate within the team.

Michan and Roger (2000, p. 205) describe coordination as ‘the orderly interpersonal actions required to perform complex tasks.’ They observe, moreover, that ‘throughout a team’s development and evolution, its coordination needs will vary but that a shared understanding of the team’s purpose facilitates coordination as the team members recognise the benefits of teamwork.’ This leads to my discussion of the importance of collaboration.

2.4.3.2 Collaboration

A study by Lim and Adelman (1997) shows the importance of coordination by highlighting the ‘philosophy of collaboration’ involved in getting various stakeholders to plan and work together. When team members were asked to comment on the strength of the team, one member identified strength in ‘all your resources coming together for one purpose, and everyone [being] kept updated on what’s going on within the school.’ According to Hackman (2002, p. 27), teams in which members
know each other’s strengths, weaknesses, expertise and abilities perform better than those that lack this knowledge, allowing them to become ‘highly skilled in coordinating activities, anticipating one another’s moves, and initiating appropriate responses even as those moves are occurring.’ Swart and Oswald (2012, p. 553) define collaboration as togetherness where ‘co-equal parties voluntarily engage in shared problem-solving, shared decision-making, and shared resources’ as they work toward a common goal.

The SBST coordinator should engage with the full range of expertise available to understand and solve problems. Elliot and Sheridan (1992, p. 327) define problem-solving skills as the intent to maximize people’s ability to generate the best available solution to a problem. This applies to the coordinator as he or she needs to support the team by providing regular collaborative problem-solving opportunities and providing support where needed (DoE, 2004, p. 44). Collaboration refers to two or more people working in a co-operative way towards achieving a common goal (Frey et. al., 2004). Dettmer, Dyck, and Thurston (1996) as well as Gronski and Pigg (2000) elaborate on this idea by describing collaboration as an interactive process that brings together diverse perspectives to accomplish plans for common goals and to produce solutions for complex problems. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) argue that, in order to build collaborative processes, educational leaders should provide opportunities for members to participate in decision making, thus helping members shape the school in ways that can accomplish shared goals. Within the SBST the common goal would be to support learners with learning barriers through the SIAS process.

Planning skills are also important and De Bona (1996, p. 120) defines a plan as a ‘mainstream in which certain things are going to be done at certain times.’ The coordinator’s plan should involve team members in achieving a common goal. Lee and Schottenfeld (2014) focus on collaboration as ‘a process of shared creation for a common goal, based on diverse perspectives and expertise in a group’. They go on to state that collaboration ‘values diverse opinions and expertise more than agreement; it also differs from coordination in that it focuses more on achieving desirable results.’
2.4.3.3 Cooperation

In a study conducted by Ford, O’Hare and Henderson (2013), common tasks and a shared purpose were shown to have created positive mutual interdependence amongst airline crew members. The study provided theoretically based empirical evidence that supported ‘the importance of creating a more inclusive “we”-oriented culture in order to promote more effective communication and teamwork.’ Certainly, teamwork within the organization encourages employee cooperation, which leads to increased self-efficacy and eventually towards increased job satisfaction (Ijaz, Kee & Irfan, 2012).

I would therefore argue that in order for SBSTs to be considered functional there has to be a relationship between coordination, collaboration and cooperation. According to Hon and Chan (2012), a ‘key to encouraging teamwork is team task interdependence, which refers to the extent to which members of a team must exchange information and resources and actually work together to complete their jobs.’ The reciprocal relationship between Collaboration, Cooperation, and Coordination is represented by an own designed figure (see Figure 2.1), in which the intersection between these three concept could be regarded as the ‘space where functionality’ in teams is heightened.

![Figure 2.1 Represents the reciprocal relationship between Coordination, Collaboration and Cooperation (Adapted from Stigmergic collaboration: a theoretical framework for mass collaboration (p. 41) by M.A. Elliott, Copyright 2007; Designing effective collaboration (p. 5)
The exposition of these concepts makes it apparent that much research on coordination has been completed, particularly within other sectors, and that limited research has been done on quality coordination within the particular context of this study, namely an SBST in a primary mainstream school. It also appears that there is a dearth of research particularly on the more ‘dispositional’ qualities of the coordinator in this regard. A discussion pertaining to attitude, belief and disposition now follows.

2.4.5 Coordinator attitude

According to Mill (1960, p. 214), attitudes may be defined as positive or negative tendencies that occur in relation to people, places, or occurrences. Schussler, Stooksberry and Bercaw (2010, p. 350), however, problematize attitude by arguing that it is ‘not a reliable predictor of behavior’ as that which one intends to do is not always what one does, and one may fail in attempts to achieve that goal, irrespective of one’s attitude.

As stated earlier in this chapter, within an Inclusive Education Framework, educators must take on the demands of pastoral care (DoE, 2000, p. 18). They therefore have many roles, including to counsel, teach, be a role model, assist with learning/social problems and provide guidance and support (DoE, 2008, p. 18; Jansen, 2001, p. 244). It is reasonable to assume that as this pastoral role is of the utmost importance and that the influence of one’s attitudes and beliefs will be central to how one acts in fulfilling this role. Research indeed indicates the importance of educator attitudes in this regard.

Masango’s (2013) research on primary school SBST coordinators indicates that some educators go to class unprepared while others have a negative attitude to learners with learning barriers. Jordan, Schwartz and McGhie-Richmond (2009) suggest that educators’ beliefs about the nature of a learner’s learning barriers and their role and responsibility in relation to these barriers may affect the way in which they teach such learners. A study conducted by Koekemoer and Olivier (2002, p. 35) concluded that beliefs and attitudes can be altered through the education of
prospective educators and that their thinking, beliefs and attitudes are shaped by the reality in which they find themselves. Mphahlele (2005), on the other hand, focused on the experiences of the foundation phase educators of an SBST in the school. The outcomes of this study, pointed to the fact that the SBST did not show a desire or attitude (interest) to really address learning barriers in the school, which resulted in low functionality and educators’ lack of confidence in referring to the SBST. Furthermore, a study conducted by Mavuso (2014) clearly indicated a move away from the medical model (which assumes that learning barriers reside primarily within the learner and that learner support should take the form of specialist interventions) to the value of attitudinal change and the development of ‘passion’ in assisting learners with learning barriers as the driving force in obtaining a functional SBST. Of particular relevance to the current study is Perumal’s (2010) study of a primary school in Gauteng, which focused on the keystone characteristics of a functional SBST. The findings of the study indicated that the principal and the SBST coordinator had positive attitudes, which then appeared to influence other staff members, thus making the SBST fully functional.

Educators and coordinators, the focus of the current study, are not held captive by their beliefs, attitudes and emotions. Vandeyar (2008, p. 704) clearly indicates that changes in attitudes and beliefs can occur as the result of educators’ experiences. I contend that new experiences can change ‘old beliefs’ and allow the educator to create new aptitudes, beliefs and perceptions which will influence eventual behaviour and actions. Koekemoer and Oliver (2002, p. 35) support this view when they state that ‘our thinking and thus also our beliefs and attitudes are shaped by the reality we find ourselves in’ and that beliefs and attitudes can be altered through education. My point of departure in the current study is that, just as ‘the attitudes and actions of each educator are rooted in their own ways of perceiving the world’ (Schussler et al., 2010, p. 351), so too will the coordination ability and the effectiveness of each SBST coordinator depend on the nature of his/her private world of perceptions.

Therefore, over and above educators’ thoughts and reasoning in the act of teaching and supporting learners with barriers to learning and development, their beliefs, attitudes, emotions and dispositions have an equally important role to play. This particular view is supported by the statement that ‘[w]hat is needed is a change in
It therefore appears that attitudes remain important in developing good practice. It is also clear that a number of terms are used interchangeably to possibly indicate attitudes, such as beliefs, passion and capability. It would also appear that no studies have yet been done on the attitudes, beliefs or capabilities of SBST coordinators.

2.5 INVITATIONAL DISPOSITIONS FOR COORDINATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT

Attitudes, although important, need extension into more consistent and intentional behaviour, which Katz and Raths described in 1985 as ‘disposition’ (Diez, 2007, p. 358). Disposition differs from attitude in the sense that it allows one to elect the actions, the intention and the frequency thereof (Diez, 2007). I would thus argue that SBST coordinators’ attitudes and their positive or negative tendencies will influence their behaviour in relation to people, places or incidents. Such dispositional behaviour is ‘a pattern of behavior exhibited frequently and in the absence of coercion, and constituting a habit of mind under some conscious and voluntary control’ (Oldacre, 2012).

Obara’s (2009) study on the processes of disposition development in K-5 educators states that educator competency requires more than teaching knowledge and skills; it requires appropriate professional dispositions. Obara argues that learning to be a professional requires thinking about domain-specific knowledge and the performance of domain-specific skills. She maintains that internalized values and norms are dispositions. Thus learning support in schools requires educators to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and dispositions to support learners who experience learning barriers (Naicker, 2005). Structures such as the SBST that support educators are essential as Mavuso (2014) contends that most learners are not appropriately supported on time. Dedicated educators, possessing the right dispositions, can be key to reaching learners who experience barriers within the classroom. I would argue that if the SBSTs are to successfully support educators in this endeavour, then the SBST coordinator as the initiator and driver of the support.
process should exhibit specific professional dispositions related to the Invitational Dispositions Framework.

There are five invitational dispositions that Oldacre (2012) proposes successful foundation phase educators should have. The first is the ‘ability to care’, for oneself, for others, as well as for the teaching profession. She claims that without the ability to care, the other four dispositional abilities lack the necessary impact to effect change in a person. The second invitational disposition is the ability to ‘act with intentionality’; for example, the educator should send out inviting messages. Oldacre (2012) claims, moreover, that the ability to ‘act with intentionality’ stems from one’s ‘ability to care’ and is necessary for the development and maintenance of the abilities ‘to trust, to respect and to be optimistic within the Intentionally Inviting level.’ She goes on to say that each of the five invitational dispositional abilities have to develop within the three areas of ‘self, others and profession.’

In order for educators to possess invitational dispositions, Oldacre (2012) suggests that educators should develop their dispositional abilities on four levels. The first of these is the level of being personally inviting with oneself. In order to do this the educator needs to develop the ability to change any negative interpretations of events into positive experiences. She goes on to say that it is important for educators to develop, and maintain, their dispositional abilities to care, trust, respect, be optimistic and act with intentionality as these abilities will lead to positive teaching and learning opportunities. I would argue that Oldacre’s framework is applicable to SBST coordinators as currently they have no framework to assist them with their role of coordination.

Therefore, I wish to expand on the Invitational Disposition Framework (Oldacre, 2012) as a conceptual framework to investigate the dispositions of SBST coordinators. This framework is based on the attitudes of educators and categorizes educator disposition as being guided by his or her belief, or perception, that each child can learn and be successful, with the consequence that the child will behave accordingly. The child will therefore respond to the educator’s behavior and consequently there will be an increase in effective teaching and learning. Oldacre (2012) states that ‘invitational education is based on the perceptual tradition which views educators as conscious agents, who are responsible for their own actions.’
She argues that people act and respond to others according to their perceptions of themselves, others and their situations. The situation a person finds themselves in at a particular moment will therefore be the key determinant of their behaviour, as well as how they respond according to their perception of the situation at that moment. Perceptions influence our understanding of past, present and future actions, interventions and events, and this is because perceptions are learnt and help us to understand the world around us (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

In my opinion, SBST coordinators require appropriate professional dispositions if they are to be productive coordinators and lead the SBST. They should have the correct skills and knowledge and possess the necessary invitational dispositions in order to be quality SBST coordinators. The invitational stance of care, intentionality, trust, respect and optimism is necessary for SBST coordinators to operate at a conscious inviting level, but the invitational education approach does not seem to provide detail on how to develop these dispositional abilities. Oldacre’s (2012) Invitational Dispositional Framework, however, serves to bridge the gap through the recognition and development of the primary dispositional abilities of care, intentionality, trust, respect and optimism.

The National Council for Accreditation for Educator Education target standard for dispositions (2008) states: ‘Candidates work with students, families, colleagues, and communities in ways that reflect the professional dispositions expected of professional educators as delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards. Candidates demonstrate classroom behaviours that create caring and supportive learning environments and encourage self-directed learning by all students. Candidates recognize when their own professional dispositions may need to be adjusted and are able to develop plans to do so.’

SBST coordinators should be self-reflexive about their own dispositions and be able to work professionally with parents, DBST, learners and other stakeholders in providing effective learning support. Obara (2009, p. 36) affirms that psychology agrees that dispositions are person-centered attributes; thus I would think that the SBST coordinator should have person-centered/child-centered attributes.

We cannot only define dispositions from a behavioural perspective. We have come to see that dispositions may represent something internal – like beliefs, morals and
values. We know that dispositions cause us to behave in certain ways, depending on the context of the situation, our awareness of our preferences and what the context requires for the anticipated outcomes to be reached. With all of this in mind, it is however still important for us to acknowledge that no two SBST coordinators perceive information in the same way because their beliefs, values, ways of thinking, prior experiences and cultures are different. Therefore, exploring the SBST coordinators’ dispositions will have to involve looking beyond mere observations and thus burrowing deeper into the mind of the coordinator (Stooksberry et al., 2009).

![Diagram showing the dispositions linked to coordination]

**Figure 2.2. Representation of the dispositions linked to coordination**

In an attempt to embed coordination of a SBST in Invitational dispositions into the coordination of an SBST, I depart from the proposed characteristics of functional teams as proposed in 1.2 (previous section). Functional teams are characterized by: Group coherence, comfort, security and understanding; Mutual trust and
transparency; Freedom and clarity of dialogic communication; Civility, respect, care and collegiality; Optimism, growth and constructive feedback; Openness, honesty and integrity; Commitment to goals; Solidarity and collaborative intent; Collaboration, reciprocity and equity; Consensus and solidarity; Commonality in vision and goals; and Self-assessment (see 1.2).

Figure 2.2 is a visual representation of the invitational dispositions (care, intentionality, trust, respect and optimism) linked to coordination characteristics and behaviours. In a functional SBST one would therefore expect at least some evidence of the following:

A disposition of Care would be visible in a functional SBST when members experience:

- A sense of belonging, security and comfort, reciprocity; where people treat them with respect, civility and honesty; and where individual uniqueness is celebrated.

A disposition of Intentionality would be visible in a functional SBST when members experience:

- Strong commonality of purpose and goals; commitment, clarity and structure; and solidarity.

A disposition of Trust would be visible in a functional SBST when members experience:

- Freedom of expression and opinion; collegiality, transparency and openness; constructive feedback; respect for consensus; and integrity.

A disposition of Respect would be visible in a functional SBST when members experience:
• Honesty; a commitment to understanding; openness to and dialogue in relationships; truthful communication; respect for uniqueness; celebration of diversity; and the opportunity for self-assessment.

A disposition of Optimism would be visible in a functional SBST when members experience:

• Openness to opinion, delegation of tasks, dialogue and reciprocity; and opportunities for personal growth, unique contribution and developmental self-assessment.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this section I have defined Inclusive Education and its values and framework. I have described the roles and responsibilities of the SBST and the DBST in achieving the goals of inclusion and learning support. I have also discussed the roles and responsibilities of the SBST coordinators in coordinating a successful SBST. Furthermore, I have elaborated on dispositional theory, the importance of disposition in teaching and Inclusive Education, and on invitational dispositions, the theory of which has formed the conceptual theoretical framework for the study.

In conclusion, I have suggested that the proposed Invitational Dispositional Framework for SBST coordinators extend from the Invitational Dispositional Framework of Oldacre (2012).

The next section presents an analysis of the data and the findings.
SECTION THREE
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the dispositions and, in particular, the invitational dispositions of one SBST coordinator in an SBST perceived to be functional in a primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District. In this section, an analysis of the data and the findings will be presented. The dissertation presents a generic qualitative study aimed at exploring and describing the dispositions, particularly the invitational dispositions, of a SBST coordinator in a SBST perceived to be functional in a mainstream primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District. Data collection was mainly centred on eliciting the opinions of SBST members and the coordinator on the functioning of the SBST; and specifically on dispositions displayed in the coordination activities of the coordinator. The study focused on one primary school perceived to have a functional SBST according to stipulated criteria. The analysis and findings were interpreted using the conceptual lens of an Invitational Disposition Framework (refer to Section 2.6).

Data was primarily collected via a self-designed survey aimed at eliciting the participants’ (8 SBST members and 1 coordinator) views on the functioning and the coordination within the SBST perceived to be functional in the Ekurhuleni South District. The survey was adapted and designed using the ‘Pre-Service Teacher Dispositions at Work’ (Almerico, 2010), The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2006), the Eastern Teachers Dispositions Index (ESTDI) (Singh & Stoloff, 2007), and the Invitational Dispositional Framework (Oldacre, 2012). The survey included closed-ended questions as well as open-ended sentences. The closed-ended questions and the open-ended sentences were consolidated into one document and provided to the participants for completion via the school principal who handed the questionnaires out to the members.

All closed-ended questions were formulated using a Likert-type scale on which the participants rated their responses according to their level of agreement with the
statements. The questions provided a six-point scale where 1 indicated strong agreement and 6 indicated strong disagreement (see Appendix E). According to McLeod (2008), ‘[l]ikert Scales have the advantage that they do not expect a simple yes/no answer from the respondent, but rather allow for degrees of opinion, or even no opinion at all.’

The closed-ended questions focused on the coordination of the SBST.

Data was also collected from the minutes of meetings (Appendix R), journal notes and SMSs (Appendix Q), photographs (Appendix Q), observation of a SBST meeting (Appendix G), a focus group interview with the SBST members (Appendix I), and an individual in-depth interview with the coordinator (Appendix J). The single focus question for the focus group interview was: ‘what is it like for you to be part of this SBST at this specific school?’, and was used to elicit the participants’ opinions and experiences of the coordination and the functioning of this particular SBST. The individual interview (Appendix J) was conducted with the SBST coordinator to elicit her views on coordination and behaviour as a SBST coordinator.

The analysis of the data was conducted by way of content analysis (refer to section 1.7). The analysis of the data now follows.

### 3.2 Analysis of Views on the Coordination and Functioning of an SBST

The completed survey data was analysed in order to elicit the views and opinions of the members regarding the functioning and coordination within one identified SBST in this study.

#### 3.2.1 Biographical detail analysis

The following biographical information was gleaned from the participants’ completed surveys:
Table 3.2.1: Biographical details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bio 1</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bio 2</td>
<td>Highest academic/professional qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio 3</td>
<td>Teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio 4</td>
<td>Subject specialisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio 5</td>
<td>Highest qualification in Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio 6</td>
<td>Highest qualification in Learning Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio 7</td>
<td>Departmental training in Learning Support in the last 3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With reference to the biographical information provided in table 3.1, all the participants were female. Of the nine participants one participant has 0-4 years’ teaching experience, four participants have between 5 and 10 years teaching experience, and four participants have between 11 and 24 years teaching experience. This indicates that four of the participants are more experienced educators, while four other educators had more than 5 years teaching experience. One could conclude that these educators have adequate teaching experience to be able to at least identify and support the learners in class. Only one participant had less than 4 years’ experience and could be regarded as possibly still ‘novice’ to the profession.

Of the nine participants, five have degrees, three have Honours degrees and only one participant appeared to have a Diploma. As these participants are all part of the SBST, one could expect them to at least have some background in development and psychology theory as much of their work will also deal with aspects thereof, although the SIAS policy document does not necessarily stipulate this as a requirement to be part of the SBST. Only one participant has an Honours degree in Psychology, while two other participants studied Psychology at second-year level and one participant at first-year level. Sharma (2011) suggests that having Psychology as a subject may equip SBST members with the necessary skills and capabilities to meet the various problems of the classroom successfully; in addition, a grounding of some kind in
Psychology theory may assist educators to understand the learner and the learner’s individual differences.

It is also interesting to note that two participants have a B.Ed. Honours degree in Inclusive Education which may allude to a measure of understanding of the learning and development challenges learners may face and the support needed, while six participants have no qualification in inclusion or learning support. Inclusive Education has been internationally recognized as succeeding in attaining equal and quality education for all children, especially those who have previously been excluded from mainstream education. The EWP6 (DoE, 2001) requires educators to accommodate all learners with diverse abilities and needs, which implies that all learners with a broad range of abilities and needs, including learners with intrinsic barriers and extrinsic barriers to learning, need to be supported in the same classroom at the same time. One may again consider the necessity for Inclusive Education as a compulsory subject for all educators and possibly as an integral part of educator training curricula, especially for those wanting to be SBST members (SIAS) (DoE, 2014).

Departmental and district support is offered for educators who may have been trained in learning support and Inclusive Education in the previous dispensation. This support is provided via regular professional development training to equip educators with basic knowledge and skills in this regard. It is interesting to note that the data collection reveals that four participants have had no training and three participants have had departmental training in learning support in the last three years.

3.2.2 Analysis of closed-ended questions: Survey

In figure 3.2 below, the average item scores for the closed-ended survey (Appendix N) are represented in a bar-chart. This bar-chart indicates the average scores for each item in the survey. Each item could be scored from 1 to 6, where 1 indicates that the participants strongly agree with the statement in the item, and 6 indicates that they strongly disagree with the statement. The resultant average item scores were qualitatively interpreted.
With reference to figure 3.2, the majority of the average scores for the items ranged between 1.1 and 1.4, ranges indicating that most participants strongly agreed with the statements.

The participants agreed strongly that SBST coordinators should be genuinely concerned about attitudes, feelings, beliefs and the welfare of other people (Q16); and should genuinely care for learners, educators, parents and SBST members’ specific needs (Q14). The participants were thus of the same opinion that genuine care for people as unique individuals with personal beliefs and needs is a behaviour that a coordinator who functions well should possess. The participants also soundly agreed that coordinators should treat members of the team, parents, learners, educators and the DBST with dignity and respect at all times (Q15).

The table below indicates the 3 highest rated items and the 4 ‘lowest’ rated items by the participants in this study. It is however noteworthy that even these lower average scores indicate the participants’ agreement with the items when considering what they believe a coordinator of an SBST should do.
Table 3.2: Highest and lowest rated items for the closed ended questions: Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest rated items</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q14) genuinely care for learners, educators, parents and other SBST members’ needs</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15) treat all members of the team, parents, learners, educators and DBST with dignity and respect at all times</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16) be genuinely concerned about attitudes, feelings, beliefs and welfare of other people</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lowest rated items</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q27) trust the DBST and outside stakeholders with referrals</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17) intentionally look for hope, send inviting messages and get to know the SBST to decide on ways forward or interventions to achieve a common goal</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29) show optimism by displaying hope when barriers are identified</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13) go for counselling/debriefing regularly</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the overall ratings as indicated in table 3.2, a number of interesting observations can be made; namely that most participants felt that the SBST coordinator should genuinely care for learners, educators, parents and other SBST members’ specific needs. The active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning experience is central to effective learning and development; parents of learners who are experiencing learning barriers should always be part of the intervention process (DoE, 2002, p. 140). The EWP6 (2001, p. 19) upholds that the main function of the SBST is to: support all learners, educators and the system as a whole, so that all learners’ needs can be met. The participants also felt that it is important for the coordinator to treat all members of the team, parents, learners, educators and the DBST with dignity and respect at all times; and be genuinely concerned about the attitudes, feelings, beliefs and welfare of others. Oldacre (2012) has postulated that people who act with intentionality often send inviting messages allowing for the full participation of all members in arranged meetings, as well as setting and meeting goals in a team collectively.

The participants showed strong agreement (average items scores = 1.4) with the following 5 statements relating to coordination. They agree that coordinators should:
• trust (Q10); trust themselves to do the best they can
• trust (Q18); build trust in the SBST members by providing timeous support to educators, learners and parents
• respect (Q11); show respect for their colleagues by coming prepared for meetings
• exhibit optimism (Q12); believe in making a difference and
• be responsive (Q22); be thoughtful and responsive listeners

It is interesting to note that the lowest rated items were related to trusting DBST (Q27), intentionally looking for hope (Q17), the showing of optimism by displaying hope (Q29), and going for counselling/debriefing regularly (Q13). However, it should be added that the average scale scores ranged from 2.4 to 2.1, which still indicated the participants’ agreement on these issues of coordination and functioning, rather than their disagreement.

Items relating to care (Q14), respect (Q15), and being genuinely concerned about others (Q16) were rated the highest by the participants and this indicates that the participants were in strong agreement with the notions of coordination and functioning which adhered to these important values.

In summary, the survey data reflected in figure 3.2 and table 3.2.2 reveals that the participants were in strong agreement that a SBST coordinator should genuinely care for learners, educators, parents and other SBST members’ specific needs; treat all members of the team, parents, learners, educators and DBST with dignity and respect at all times; and be genuinely concerned about the attitudes, feelings, beliefs and welfare of other people. Participants were less strongly in agreement – but nevertheless still in agreement – that a coordinator should trust the DBST (Q27), intentionally look for hope (Q17), display hope when barriers are identified (Q29), and lastly go for counselling regularly (Q13), the lowest rating items in table 3.2.

3.3.3 Analysis of open-ended sentences: Survey

The participants were requested to complete 20 open-ended sentences concerning their views of the functioning of their SBST. The responses were recorded electronically on a personal computer and transferred to table format (Appendix F).
Each participant’s individual answer was recorded separately. Making use of the protocol for qualitative content analysis, I read the answers to identify main ideas or patterns in the answers to the open-ended questions. For the purpose of analysis each open-ended sentence is discussed in terms of the main idea and/or patterns that emerged from an analysis of all the responses. These main ideas and/or patterns are presented in table 3.3. The following codes will be used in the discussion of the analysis and findings:

- **P= Participant and**
- **Q = Question**

**Table 3.3 Main ideas/patterns identified in open-ended questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open ended sentences</th>
<th>Main idea/patterns extracted from initial analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The SBST at my school is</td>
<td>Hardworking, effective, supportive, meet weekly, functional, busy, efficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My role within the SBST is to</td>
<td>Liaise with learners, parents and educators, represent/report on a grade, coordinate and monitor support within a grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The SBST coordinator</td>
<td>Works hard, committed, supportive, knowledgeable, available, amazing, organised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The SBST committee is involved in</td>
<td>Learner support, identification, monitor retentions, referrals, counselling, academic support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Within the SBST meetings I am always given the opportunity to</td>
<td>Voice concerns, opinions, solutions, feedback, report back on grade they are responsible for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would describe the SBST coordinator as someone</td>
<td>Who cares, knowledgeable, trustworthy, supportive, sympathetic, respectful, dedicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Our meetings are</td>
<td>Lengthy, detailed, structured, fruitful, interactive, rigorous, authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If I were the SBST coordinator</td>
<td>Don’t want this role, overwhelming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The SBST coordinator and I</td>
<td>Professional, good relationship, work well together, understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Most of the parents do not know that the SBST</td>
<td>Tries to help, exists, deals with many cases, caring and supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Sometimes I feel that the SBST</td>
<td>Not taken seriously, taken advantage of, are ignored, too much admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I often wish the SBST could</td>
<td>Meet less frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Most SBSTs</td>
<td>Are not as effective, non-existent, not functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Sometimes I feel the SBST coordinator</td>
<td>High expectations, expects too much from members, has too much to deal with, little time to deal to focus on support due to her teaching and being HOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I would describe our SBST as functional because</td>
<td>See results, cases resolved, make a difference, meet weekly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants’ views on the SBST at their school (Q1) was that it ‘is efficient’ (P1, P2, P3, P4) and ‘effective’ (P9), is ‘hardworking’ (P4, P5, P8), ‘is busy’ (P8), ‘meets weekly’ (P1, P9), ‘is supportive’ (P5, P9), and ‘functional’ (P2, P6, P7, P9). This indicates that participants believe that the SBST at their school functions well. This finding is strongly supported by views such as ‘The SBST at my school is functional’ (P6) and ‘The SBST at my school is the most functional I have ever experienced’ (P7), that clearly focus on the functionality of the SBST. The findings also indicate that the participants are of the opinion that the SBST is working hard (meets weekly, hardworking). This finding is strongly supported by views such as ‘meets frequently to discuss issues kids are facing’ (P1), ‘very effective and supportive. We meet weekly’ (P9), and ‘hardworking and honestly care about those we work with’ (P5).

With regard to the roles that each member plays in the SBST (Q2), the responses that I received were: to liaise with the learners, parents and educators (P3, P8); represent/report on a grade (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8); and coordinate and monitor support within a grade (P5, P9). In general the SBST members seem to have to deal with issues of functionality and coordination. It is also clear that this SBST is constituted such that each grade is represented within the SBST. Each member of the group thus represents a grade at the meetings and monitors support within the grade for which they are responsible. This is evident in comments such as ‘liaises between the grade 5 educators and the SBST’ (P4), ‘is to represent the grade 1 team’ (P6), and ‘deal with grade 6 support cases and bring grade 6 issues to SBST’ (P7).

Regarding the views concerning the SBST coordinator (Q3), members report that she ‘works hard, is committed, supportive, knowledgeable, available, amazing,'
organised.' This finding is strongly supported by views such as: ‘works hard’ (P1), ‘is organised and committed to her role’ (P6), ‘is on the ball’ (P4), ‘is very supportive and knowledgeable’ (P9), and ‘works hard, is an excellent head, deals with huge issues, and is amazing at her job’ (P5). P8 goes even further in insisting that the coordinator is ‘overworked!’ This is supported by P7 who proclaims the coordinator should have SBST as an ‘exclusive portfolio’.

Considering what the committee is involved in (Q4), the participants answered ‘learner support’ (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9), ‘identification’ (of learner difficulties and support) (P1, P2), ‘monitors retentions’ (P8), ‘referrals’ (P8, P9), ‘counselling’ (P5, P6), and ‘academic support’ (P1, P2, P7, P8, P9). Most members’ views of what they are given the opportunity to do within the meetings (Q5) were ‘voice concerns’ (P1, P5), ‘opinions’ (P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9), ‘solutions’ (P1), ‘feedback’ (P2, P4, P6, P9), and ‘report back on grade they are responsible for’. I deduce from these comments that the coordinator allows members to have a voice in meetings as all participants are given the opportunity to voice their concerns, opinions and frustrations in SBST meetings.

This coordinator (Q6) is described as someone ‘who cares, is knowledgeable, trustworthy, supportive, sympathetic, respectful, and dedicated’. This finding is strongly supported by views such as: ‘cares for the holistic wellbeing of the kids’ (P1), ‘cares and sympathetic to learners with challenges’ (P2), ‘cares and takes her position and role very seriously’ (P4), ‘invests a tremendous amount of herself’ (P7), ‘can be trusted whole heartedly, who is honest and knowledgeable’ (P5), ‘is respectful and understanding. Knowledgeable in what she is doing’ (P6), ‘trustworthy, dedicated and caring’ (P8), and ‘knows what’s happening and very supportive’ (P9). The opinions of the SBST members clearly indicate that the coordinator is indeed caring, knowledgeable, trustworthy, respectful and supportive within the SBST as a team.

It appears that the SBST members generally feel that SBST meetings are worth the effort, but that these meetings are also tiring and time consuming (Q7). Six of the participants mentioned that the meetings are lengthy (P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9). Furthermore, two participants mentioned that the meetings were held weekly (P3, P6), which may allude to time spent on meetings. Three participants said that the
meetings were detailed (P5, P6, P9), and four participants implied that the SBST meeting allows for interactions and discussions (P1, P4, P6, P9). In all cases one can deduce that meetings of this nature will be time consuming and energy draining. Yet frequent communication builds relationships amongst team members and ‘enhances the quality of teamwork through its ability to respond rapidly to new information by minimizing delays’ (Heredero, et al., 2015).

The finding regarding participants’ views on the coordinator (Q6) is aligned with participants’ views when asked what their expectations would be if they had to coordinate an SBST (Q8). It appears from the participants’ answers that they reiterate that the coordinator’s role is too much work and overwhelming. P4 and P9 undeniably do not want this role; P8 mentions that she would ‘be super overwhelmed’; P5 would ‘try and follow her and try learn from her’; and P9 says ‘I’d run away. Wouldn’t want this responsibility’. Interestingly P1 feels that more compassion should be shown to educators – ‘show compassion towards teacher and learners and have an empathetic approach when dealing with learners’ – and P3 ‘would try to reduce the amount of paperwork that teachers need to complete.’ In addition, P2 would provide support to learners with academic barriers and she would ‘design individual activities.’

Concerning the relationship between individual members and the coordinator (Q9), participants claim to have a good working relationship with her. ‘Have a professional and respectful relationship’ (P1), ‘have a good understanding’ (P3), ‘get along and share ideas’ (P6), and ‘get on like a house on fire. Mega respect’ (P7). In addition, participants indicated that they ‘work well together’ (P4), ‘work well together, are working together on a case now’ (P5), ‘get along well and work together to achieve common goals’ (P8), and ‘work well together’ (P9). P1 says that their relationship is a ‘professional and respectful one.’

According to the participants, parental understanding of the responsibilities and commitments of the SBST (Q10) appears to be very limited. Participants P2, P6 and P9 state that they do not think that the parents even know that the SBST exists. Although the participants feel that the SBST really does care and wants to help or support the children at the school, as elaborated on by P4, P5, P7 and P8, they are of the view that the parents do not amply understand the work that they are doing.
within the SBST. ‘I don’t think some parents are even aware that their children are discussed and are being monitored out of concern’ (P9). P4 specifically insists that most parents do not know that the SBST ‘is so in tune with their children and the lengths we will go to, to help these children.’

Participants’ deepening critical reflection regarding the SBST functioning is elicited in responses to Q11 (Sometimes I feel that the SBST ....). The analysis of the responses indicates that this team feels that they are not given enough credit for what they do. Four participants feel that the SBST is not taken too seriously: ‘is not taken seriously’ (P6), ‘are the power rangers but everybody else thinks we have delusions’ (P7), ‘not taken seriously’ (P8, P9). P3 elaborates a bit more and feels that the team is ‘isolated at the school and doesn’t get the same attention as academics.’ P1 mentions that ‘meetings end too late’ and P5 says that the team is ‘asked to do too much admin.’ P4 however feels that the team ‘gets taken advantage of.’ Lastly, P2 feels that sometimes the SBST ‘is not giving proper support to learners with academic barriers.’ There seems to be disregard for the work that is been done by the SBST. These views may be clustered in:

- Views concerning the recognition and the importance of the work done
- Views concerning the overextension of the SBST
- Views concerning the adequacy of the support to learners with barriers to learning and development.

These views further support the general notion that the SBST is working hard and is often overextended.

The general notion that the SBST is working hard is further supported by the views clustered above. In response to Q12 (I often wish the SBST could ...), it is clear from the data that some participants feel that their meetings are too frequent, as they meet once a week, and lengthy. P4 wishes the team could ‘meet less frequently or at least for shorter periods of time’, and P9 wishes the team could ‘meet monthly instead of weekly’. Recognition for, authority of and support of the SBST in question, particularly from structures outside the school, is mentioned by P5 who states that she wishes the ‘SBST could make decisions with regards to retentions and LSEN – final decisions.’ P3’s views point to over-extendedness and commitment to quality support when she mentions that she wishes the SBST could ‘have less duties to
afford them more time to deal with important cases.’ P7 wishes the SBST could ‘get more respect and more support and in doing so the team’s opinions would be valued and heard’, which alludes to recognition. Interestingly, P2 wishes the SBST could ‘focus on designing ways to support those learners with needs’; this seems to indicate a very strong learner-centred focus.

General opinion concerning the nature of SBSTs is sought in Q13 (Most SBSTs……). Participants 7, 8 and 9 feel that SBSTs are non-existent in other schools. This finding is strongly supported by views such ‘don’t exist’ (P7), ‘are unheard of’ (P8) and ‘I know of a lot that are non-existent in other schools’ (P9). P2 and P6 feel that most SBSTs are not as effective as theirs and P3 feels that most SBSTs ‘are not functional at schools.’ Recent studies have shown that SBSTs are not functioning as well as they should in the majority of schools in South Africa (Maphula, 2005; Mbata, 2005; Perumal, 2005). These studies show that educators struggle with what constitutes a SBST and how to provide support to learners who experience barriers to learning.

According to opinions expressed by the participants in response to Q14 (Sometimes I feel the SBST coordinator ….), the coordinator has set high standards for herself and her team members. Three participants agree that the coordinator has too much to do. P5 explains that the coordinator has ‘too much to do as she teaches and is also a HOD’; P1 says the coordinator ‘has too much to deal with’, and P8 says she ‘has too much on her plate.’ In addition, the team seems to feel that the coordinator may be putting too much extra pressure on them: P4 feels that the coordinator ‘has high expectations’, P3 feels that she is ‘unreasonable with some of the requests that she makes’ and P9 feels that the coordinator ‘expects too much of the team.’

The participants in this study view their team as functional (Q15) because they are consistent with meetings: ‘we meet on a weekly basis and that gives us an opportunity to follow up on important cases’ (P3). Seeing results is important to them: ‘we see results’ (P4), ‘we see results and help children as well as their families’ (P9), and ‘some cases have been resolved’ (P1). P2 believes the team is functional because when they meet they ‘report on learners in their grades whom are failing’. P6 claims the team is functional because ‘we all get along and share ideas and opinions.’
Important views concerning the coordinator’s treatment of the SBST members were elicited by Q16. According to the analysis of the views, the coordinator is fair to her members, treats them professionally, respects them and cares about them. This is emphasised by views such as: she treats us ‘like a syndicate. Wonderful ladies but kinda like a gang’ (P7), which indicates a deep solidarity and belonging. The general views were that the coordinator treated them with respect: ‘fairly and with respect’ (P6), ‘with respect’ (P3), ‘well and professionally’ (P2), ‘well and with respect’ (P4 and P9), and ‘equally with respect and cares about our opinions’ (P8).

In relation to their views on conflict resolution within the team (Q17), the general opinion is that conflict is rare, in fact largely non-existent, in this SBST. This finding is strongly supported by the short comment ‘none’ (P4,5,6,9). In support of this finding P2 states that conflict within the SBST ‘hardly ever exists’ and ‘is treated in a professional manner’ (P3). Emphasis is further placed on the fact that conflicts ‘don’t happen often’ (P8). P7 seems to be in agreement that there is no conflict within the team; however, she maintains that ‘the problem is with the rest of them. By them I mean non-SBST’. This alludes to the opinions expressed earlier considering the recognition and respect for the work done by the SBST (Q11).

The participants are of the opinion that communication is in fact open and honest within this SBST (Q18) and that such communication is important for a team to be functional. This finding is strongly supported by the following views: ‘is open and honest’ (P1), ‘is good and open’ (P4), ‘works effectively, openly and honestly’; (P5), and ‘Very good. Very honest and open. We feel comfortable with each other’ (P9). P3 affirms that she feels that the communication ‘is effective’, and P2 feels that it is professional. P6 says ‘we communicate well as a team’; P8 agrees, but adds that ‘it could sometimes be better.’

With regard to Q19 (In SBST meetings we….), the SBST appears to be focused on their goals of supporting and assisting children with barriers to learning. Most participants phrased similar responses to this question. All members state that in SBST meetings they discuss children’s behaviour and academic, social, and emotional issues. This is evident in the data collected: ‘discuss issues about learner behaviour and academic issues’ (P2), ‘have opportunity to discuss issues that concern us’ (P3), ‘discuss each child with social and/or academic issues’ (P4),
‘discuss children academically and emotional progress’ (P6), and ‘discuss each grade and child on the minutes’ (P9). Solutions are also discussed: ‘discuss problems and solutions and pending case’ (P1) and ‘share, find solutions and plan’ (P5). P7 and P8 make interesting observations when they mention their own emotions during these meetings. P7 affirms we ‘vent, eat and sometimes cry’, and P8 says ‘have many emotions, happy, sad, relieved, frustrated.’ These acknowledgments of emotion clearly indicate the deep commitment, camaraderie and focus the SBST has developed as a team, which is borne out by responses to a number of other questions in the survey.

Members’ views on Q20 (After SBST meetings I feel …) yield important findings. P4 says she feels ‘disheartened’ and displays disbelief when she hears what the learners are doing: ‘I can’t believe that such young children are doing the things they are doing’. P5 goes on to say that ‘our children have to deal with so much’. In addition to feeling disbelief P9 also feels ‘irritated – depending on the length of the meeting’. P1 feels that there is still unfinished business, as she says, ‘I feel like there is still a lot of work to be done.’ Members seem to feel exhausted and overwhelmed. P2 says she feels ‘drained when I hear challenges we have in the school’ and P7 feels ‘exhausted but also feel like I’ve made a difference.’ These views and experiences allude to possible secondary trauma experienced by members. Motta (2012, p. 257) states that hearing about traumatic situations and identifying with those experiencing trauma can result in secondary trauma. If this is the case then the DBST needs to make these members aware of the Employees Wellness Programme (EWP6) so that they may receive debriefing. According to the EWP6 website, the programme provides psycho-social counselling services to employees and their dependants in all 11 official South African languages (icas.co.za).

In summary, the findings from this survey indicate that, in general, this team is highly functional in the sense that it has regular meetings, identifies learners with barriers to learning, and provides academic support and learner support. In addition, members have stated that they see results, cases are resolved, and they feel they make a difference in the lives of the learners and the school. The group members also feel empowered as each member liaises with learners, parents and educators, in line with their roles and responsibilities. In addition, each member is responsible for supporting, monitoring and coordinating a grade; thus each member is empowered
by having a vital role to play in the SBST. Each member’s opinions are valued as they are given opportunity to voice their concerns, provide solutions and feedback, and report on the grade for which they are responsible. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) highlight the importance of such empowerment. They maintain that effective coordinators influence the development of their members by encouraging reflection and challenging their members to examine their assumptions about their work. They argue, moreover, that effective coordinators model desired dispositions and actions to enhance members’ beliefs about their own capacities.

3.4 ANALYSIS OF ALL THE INTERVIEW DATA, ALL FIELD NOTE DATA AND ALL DOCUMENTS

The findings from the following data-sources will be discussed hereafter. In this study, I made use of the following data sources, namely:

- The focus group interview (Appendix I),
- the individual interview (Appendix J),
- the observation data of the meeting (Appendix G),
- and document analysis of sms’s and field notes (Appendix P).

I have explained the procedures followed for qualitative content analysis in section one (1.5.4.3). In analysing the data, I first transcribed the interviews. I then noted data that, according to my interpretation, would assist me to make sense of the data through the inductive content analysis protocol. This process allowed me to gain a more nuanced understanding of the data. This meant that I needed to become immersed in the data. I therefore read through it repeatedly (Elo & Kyngas, 2008, p. 111), and refined my notes continuously. I attempted to define concepts and categories emerging from the data, and, in the final reading of the text, attempted to:

1. Confirm that my concepts and categories accurately represented the interview responses as far as possible
2. Explore how the concepts and categories may relate to one another

I thus made use of open coding (by writing notes and headings on the text) whilst I read the data, reread it and made further notes and headings in the margins to describe the content. After the initial open coding was complete, I made lists of
categories and grouped them under similar headings. According to Cavanagh (1997), creating categories provides a way of describing the phenomenon to increase one’s understanding and generate knowledge (see section 1.5.4.3). I firstly analysed the focus group interview and coded it to arrive at central themes through the qualitative data-analysis protocols (Appendix I). There were only six SBST members present during the focus group as the two remaining members had other school commitments scheduled during that time.

Table 3.4 presents an extract of the initial open coding of the focus group interview.

**Table 3.4: Extract from the open coding of the focus group interview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RAW DATA</th>
<th>POSSIBLE PATTERN IN THE DATA</th>
<th>NOTED DATA THAT LED TO THE POSSIBLE PATTERN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to really like (pause). Now if anyone wants to respond you may respond. (pause) Well I will (laugh), mixed emotions, I think frustrated, definitely frustrated because there is so much we want to do and so much that you feel like you can do but, you actually can’t follow through, you cannot do exactly what you wanna do to help a child, um so I do, I do feel very frustrated, sometimes I just want to go and hug somebody (laugh) but you can’t, also I don’t know if it is going to be alright, um ja so I think frustrated mostly, um I think troublesome (laugh, rest of members nod and agree), exhausted at the amount of work that you actually have to do for</td>
<td>Frustrated, want to do more</td>
<td>frustrated, definitely frustrated so much we want to do and so much that you feel like you can do but, you actually can’t you cannot do exactly what you wanna do to help a child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The identified patterns in the data were then considered in an attempt to find similarities in the data analysed, and possible codes were identified (See extract; table 3.5. The complete table can be found in Appendix K).
Table 3.5: Coding of SBST members’ views on the coordination and function of an SBST: Focus group interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible pattern identified from the members responses from focus group interview (data sources in brackets)</th>
<th>Open coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘frustrated, definitely frustrated’ (P2L32); ‘frustrations feel from the fact that when you watch high school musical we are the dorks at the school’ P1L53 &amp;L58; ‘its very frustrating nobody want to be on the SBST, and the people who are on the team carrier the load’ P6L138) ‘I think we should get a day off a week’ ’(P2L151) ‘Extra pay’ (P3L153) Exhausted - Paperwork frustrates (P2L38) ‘I would love to do what we are doing now but that as our only job’(P2L40), ‘overwhelmed’P4L173; ‘especially the cases that we deal with’ (P5L185) ‘you sit till 2 or 3 o’clock at night because you are busy with support’ (P6L127) ‘enjoyable, it’s just time consuming; (P2L42)</td>
<td>Frustrated and overwhelmed because they are so committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘you get criticised because you, the energiser bunny running through the school the whole day dealing with everything all the time..’(P6L124) ‘we are definitely laughed at(P6L143) ‘yeh the quacks hahahaha, the quacks are coming again’(P1L144) ‘they don’t understand why we do what we do (P2L60) ‘they have told us straight to our faces, I will not meet with parents (P1L96) No support documents (P4L84) Too much effort for other educators (P2L87, P3L88) ‘they are doing nothing…. No evidence in the books..’ (P3L101)</td>
<td>Not taken seriously by other educators, lack of support from educators due to lack of understanding the importance of SBST?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I totally agree with what she is saying’ (P3L76); ‘its like we are fighting all the time against the rest of the school (P3L77 ‘she feels scared because she feels …’ (P3L92) P6L190,L196; ‘we try to put systems in place to reduce paperwork to ensure that the child is getting what they are supposed to get…’ (P6L122)</td>
<td>Collaboration, deep commitment toward one each other in group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common goal of group is not met by other educators No commitment or support by others educators</td>
<td>Common goals important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members given opportunity to take the lead</td>
<td>Shared responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBST group support, listen to each other, soundboard ‘someone else who actually listens but also the reassurance that comes out of this group…. Platform for soundboard is there..’(P6L196), ‘…. Confidentiality is awesome in the group…’(P6L205) (‘It’s nice to know that by coming here they have got my back and they really really do’ (P1L211) ‘we back each other up a lot…. Have the same interests and goals’ (P2L209)</td>
<td>Basic needs met within group/support within the group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An individual interview (Appendix J) was conducted with the coordinator after the completion and the initial analysis of the SBST focus group interview and the SBST meeting. The analysis of the interview data with the coordinator is reported in table 3.6. Table 3.6 provides examples of the identified Codes and the underlying patterns in the data from the individual interview.

Table 3.6. Identified Codes from individual interview with coordinator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portion of question in the interview schedule with regard to:</th>
<th>Codes and underlying patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Welcoming</td>
<td>Respect, taught from a young age (consistent) (L5) I tend to welcome everybody like that, um my upbringing played a very important role. (L6) I've been taught since a young age whether it's a GA or a district official that I deal with, I need to treat everybody on the same level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8 Referring to cleaner as 'aunty….'</td>
<td>Respect, treats all people with same, cleaner or educator (L65) it's a respect thing, it's very important (L67) I tend to treat them with respect and especially when they are older than I am, I will never address them by their name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11 Eye contact with each member</td>
<td>Acknowledgement and respect, whilst maintain order, consistent (L93) maintaining eye contact with them is a form of acknowledgement and respect (L97) strengthens us as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13 Manage to coordinate despite lack of support</td>
<td>Takes her role seriously Does not want to be too pushy, organised, role model to educators, plays different roles, team player (L136 ) people to do what you need them to do without being too pushy (L139) I have the advantage, I'm very organised (L140) I don't expect from the teachers, unless I set a tone (L147) are times when I sit in the support meetings and I'm just the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 Giving each person opportunity for feedback</td>
<td>A technique for controlling what is discussed in meeting (L41) our way of tracking children through the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 Taking control of meeting when others go off topic</td>
<td>cares for the members, puts their needs first, allows them to vent in a safe space (L14) I allow them to vent I tend to get a little bit more out of the team than I need because they have an opportunity to say what they are thinking, what they feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 Speaks slower</td>
<td>learnt a technique from attending her own counselling Gets the attention of members (L22) if it's something that I really want the ladies to pick up on, um I will take my time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 Prepared for</td>
<td>She prepares so as not to leave out important information (L29) you can drown very easily with the demand of caseloads that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10  Going the extra mile (diabetic child)</td>
<td>Children first, solution focused, committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L30) very cautious not to drop one of those most important cases that I’m dealing with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L85) I also look at the shortest route to the best solution for the child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12  Assisting of members</th>
<th>Also feels like SBST is not given priority, Experience vs. support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(L121) we have to function optimally however we get the least amount of support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L130) I’ve experienced that only if teachers serve on the SBST do they understand the importance of a piece of paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q6  Advising members to ‘double up’</th>
<th>Protection of her members is important, shared responsibility, teamwork, empowering members. Finds strengths in her members and utilizes that strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(L45) method of protecting the teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L48) also makes it possible for me to track neglect cases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L53) a method of empowering the ladies in the team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7  If members spend too much time discussing, you interrupt</th>
<th>Development/empowerment, solution focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(L60) I try to develop the members that is here</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q9  Asks members to take lead or give them responsibility</th>
<th>Delegates/empowers, gets team to all pull their weight, thus teamwork, CARES, FAIRNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(L72) ladies are inundated and very thinly spread</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L74) everybody brings their piece; it alleviates the fact that one person is responsible for everything all of the time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q10  Going the extra mile (diabetic child)</th>
<th>Children first, solution focused, committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(L85) I also look at the shortest route to the best solution for the child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q14  Staying balanced</th>
<th>Keeps active, does community work, attends debriefing, support system, reads positive books, motivational talks. From a young age she was a motivational speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important friendship that started her passion. She came from an organised, supportive family. Motivated and cared for friend. Connected to children with barriers when she was a young child, patient, personality, attracted to people with barriers to learning. Every person she has been exposed to has formed her character, Sees good in people, Reconnects with that early friendship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L152) I train four times a week and I do voluntary work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L153) my main purpose in the dojo is to give love, support and talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L156) debriefing session at least once a month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L170) positive books, I tend to try and I attend at least one motivational talk per year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L195) I just had the ability to play with them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L200) my personality has always been attracted to the heart broken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L209) friend, person, child that I’ve ever been exposed to um, every case that I’ve dealt with shapes me on a daily basis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the analysis of the data sets, I attempted to identify similarities and coherence of the identified codes to establish a more salient understanding of the views about the functioning and coordination of the SBST. I worked across all the different data sets and devised a legend (Table 3.7) which assisted in identifying the sources of the data during the discussion of the findings.
Table 3.7. Legend for data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Participant 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGI</td>
<td>Focus group interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Individual Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short Message Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>Photo’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.8 represents the outcome of the consideration and consolidation of the analysis of the different data sets to arrive at possible themes. The proposed broader categories of data including examples of the actual supporting data from data sources are presented in tabular form in table 3.8.

Table 3.8. Proposed categories emerging from all the data concerning views on the coordination of and function of an SBST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed categories</th>
<th>Examples of actual data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared responsibility</td>
<td>(FGI) ‘We do what we do’ P2L60. ‘People who are on support based team carry the load of the school’ P6L139 (OB) ‘She allows members to join in the shared responsibility of the team as at one point she asks the member that was venting about some learners “So where are you with the parents?”’ (II)-(L74) ‘everybody brings their piece, it alleviates the fact that one person is responsible for everything all of the time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common goals and Optimistic about these goals</td>
<td>(FGI) ‘we believe that we have the same core purpose’ P1L70. ‘we have the same interests and goals’ P2L209 (OB) the whole team is encouraged to discuss a plan of action, I observed the group making goals together for each learner (II) with regard to feedback from each member (L41) our way of tracking children through the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication/Respect</td>
<td>(FGI) ‘somebody has come through with that child and said well we have seen the same thing’ P5L219 (OB) I also noticed that she gives each member undivided attention and makes consistent eye contact with them when they speak; she acknowledges everything they say by nodding (II)-(L93) ‘maintaining eye contact with them is a form of acknowledgement and respect’ (L97) ‘strengthens us as a group’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Basic needs are intentionally met by the group           | (FGI) ‘I do get the help that I need from within the group’ P6L188. (OB) The coordinator therefore allows the members the space to vent their challenges’ and she also allows them to laugh and joke. (II)-(L85) ‘I also look at the shortest route to the best solution for the
### 3.5 THEMES IDENTIFIED FROM THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The following themes were identified after an analysis of the abovementioned data sources (in table 3.9 below). All themes were derived from coded categories derived from the initial analyses. These categories were considered in terms of their relation to one another, and subsequently grouped to form the identified themes. The following themes were identified (refer to table 3.9):

#### Table 3.9: Themes identified from the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>Collaboration and care&lt;br&gt;shared responsibility, basic needs met, trust/transparency, shared goals, commitment and respect, collegial communication, Consensus container, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Members have a voice, trust, support, responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN THEMES

3.6.1 Group Cohesion

According to Goodman, Ravlin and Schminke (1987), group cohesion is the general feeling of affinity among group members and is central for purposeful group performance and effective organizational functioning (Beal, Cohen, Burke & McLendon, 2003). From my short literature review on cohesion effectiveness, it can be gleaned that both task and social cohesion affect performance and outcomes. According to Schaub (2010), social cohesion depends strongly upon shared values and attitudes.

Schaub (2010, p. 87) describes social cohesion as ‘the nature and quality of the emotional bonds of friendship, liking, caring and closeness among group members.’ The interviews and observations of the data in this study show that the team under focus is socially cohesive:

- (FGI) ‘I agree totally with what she says, it’s like we are against the rest of the school’ (P3L76).
- (FGI) ‘you know we will work together’ (P2L210)
- (OB) coordinator allows her about a minute to vent and then calmly interrupts her to start talking about ways forward. The coordinator shows compassion with the member and also mentions that she feels helpless at times but that solutions need to be looked at……
- (II) ‘I allow them to vent; I tend to get a little bit more out of the team than I need because they have an opportunity to say what they are thinking, what they feeling’ (L14).
- (II) ‘method of protecting the teachers’ (L41)

Lim and Adelman (1997) emphasize the importance of coordination by highlighting the ‘philosophy of collaboration’ necessary for getting numerous stakeholders to plan and work together. Heredero et al. (2015) argue that ‘working together toward a prioritized common goal reflects the team members shared vision’, a prerequisite for effective teamwork. In addition, Plaza (2015) agrees that ‘working as a team requires sharing common goals’. From the data, it is clear that the team under study provides support for learners with learning barriers and follows a shared vision to produce the desired results indicated below:
• (OB) the whole team is encouraged to discuss a plan of action; I observed the group making goals together for each learner
• (II) ‘track neglect cases’ (L48)
• (II) ‘I tend to look for a solution for the children’ (L87)
• (FGI) ‘you are always busy with the support, you use whatever time we have’ (P6L129)
• (Appendix P) shows the sms’s the coordinator has sent me; it is clear that she is consistent and only wants the best for the learners.
• (Appendix R) shows that the coordinator came to the meeting prepared as she had a copy of the minutes from the previous meeting as well as a list of learners who would be discussed in the meeting.

SBST meetings should focus on developing strategies to address the needs and barriers to learning, and should include parent consultation and support as addressed in the SIAS (DoE, 2008, p. 88). That this is happening in the team under study is supported by the data below:

• (Appendix Q) Picture 3 shows a record of SBST referrals from 2012 to 2014, as well as SBST minutes for 2014 and the special concessions for which the team has applied
• (Appendix Q) Picture 2 shows recording sheets and support files with learners’ individual cases, evidence of meetings with parents and outside stakeholders
• (Appendix Q) Picture 4 shows SBST referrals to the Educational Psychologist, the coordinator’s high school administration file, the SBST tracking file (which is used to track progress on cases), the SBST educator reports on individual learners’ support, LSEN numbers that were received from the district office as well as a record of social cases
• (II) ‘I sit on a Wednesday night and just keep track of where I’m at because you can drown very easily with the demand of caseloads that comes up’ (L28)
• (II) ‘very cautious not to drop one of those most important cases that I’m dealing with’ (L30)
• (II) ‘possible for me to track neglect cases’ (L48)

Malone and Crowston (1990) detail the importance of group decisions, and how these decisions require members of the group to communicate about the goals that need to be achieved, the alternative decisions that need to be made and then finally about the choices that are made. In the case under study, each member of the group
is responsible for representing a grade; for meeting with learners, parents and other educators regarding support programmes; and for giving feedback to SBST meetings. Therefore, each member has a common goal to support learners with barriers. De Bona (1996, p. 120) observes that planning skills are important and that the coordinator’s plan should involve team members in achieving a common goal. In this particular case, the coordinator has planned to involve each member by making them responsible for a grade.

Task cohesion is described as ‘the shared commitment among group members to achieve a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group’ (Schaub, 2010). Thus a SBST with high task cohesion is composed of members who share a common goal. This high task cohesion can be observed in the data:

- (FGL) ‘we believe that we have the same core purpose’ P1L70. ‘we have the same interests and goals’ (P2L209).
- (II) ‘sometimes the ladies have an easier way of dealing with the parent so it’s a strategy to delegate and empower the team’ (L55).
- (II) ‘everybody brings their piece; it alleviates the fact that one person is responsible for everything’ (L74).

Krantz (2013) refers to shared responsibility as an important characteristic of team work. From the data we can see that the coordinators’ files are organised (Appendix Q). This indicates that all members could go to the files at any time in the absence of the coordinator to access required information. Decker and Lesser (1993) state that, in order to build a model of coordination, the agents should share a common language for communicating results, as well as other information such as the abstract goals needed for coordination. De Bona (1996, p. 120) emphasizes that planning skills are important: the coordinator’s plan should involve team members in achieving a common goal. In the case under study, the coordinator has planned to involve each member by making them responsible for a grade and each member is given the opportunity to report back about the grade in the SBST meetings. Members share a lot of the responsibility as reflected in the following data sources:

- (OB) The coordinator allows members to join in the shared responsibility of the team as at one point she asks the member that was venting about some learners what the way forward could be.
• (II) ‘everybody brings their piece, it alleviates the fact that one person is responsible for everything all of the time’ (L74).
• (FGI) ‘We do what we do’ (P2L60).
• (FGI) ‘people who are on support based team carry the load of the school’ (P6L139)

According to Lvina, Johns and Vandenberghe (2015), being socially in tune with the needs of colleagues and sincere in interactions with them will lead to increased group cohesion. The data reveals that the group environment under study allows for the free expression of feelings, ideas and thoughts:

• (FGI) ‘I do get the help that I need from within the group’ (P6L188).
• (OB) The coordinator therefore allows the members the space to vent their challenges and she also allows them to laugh and joke.
• (II) ‘I also look at the shortest route to the best solution for the child’ (L85).
• (II) ‘if it’s something that I really want the ladies to pick up on, um I will take my time’ (L22).
• (II) ‘I don’t expect from the teachers unless I set a tone’ (L140).
• (FGI) ‘a platform for soundboard is here’ (P6L199).
• (FGI) ‘we back each other up a lot’ (P2L208).
• (FGI) ‘we talk to one another and someone else can say you are stable you are not losing your mind’ (P6L223).

According to Stringer et al. (1992, p. 95), a coordinator should possess rapport building and communication skills that enhance the relationship between the coordinator and the members of her team. Communication deepens trust and develops into mutual respect, as elaborated on in section 1. Respect is highlighted by the following data:

• (OB) I noticed that the coordinator gives each member undivided attention and makes consistent eye contact with them when they speak; she acknowledges everything they say by nodding
• (FGI) ‘there’s someone else who actually listens’ (P6L195)
• (FGI) ‘I put something out you know we will work together’ (P2L210)

This is also evident in the individual interview with the coordinator when I questioned her on her use of eye contact:
• (IIL93) ‘maintaining eye contact with them is a form of acknowledgement and respect’
• (IIL97) ‘Strengthens us as a group’

The coordinator provides regular support as she conducts SBST meetings every week where detailed minutes are taken (Appendix R).

Zaccaro, Rittman and Marks (2001) argue that ‘[t]eam cohesion represents the degree of member integration or “bonding” in which members share a strong commitment to one another and/or to the purpose of the team.’ In other words, the cohesive SBST has a sense of unity that moves beyond individual differences or intentions. This is evident in the following data:

• (FGI) ‘the reassurance that comes out of the group’ (P6L196).
• (FGI) ‘A platform for soundboard is there’ (P6L198).
• (FGI) ‘Absolutely’ (P2L201).
• (FGI) ‘I put something out you know we will work together’ (P2L210)
• (IIL45) ‘a method of protecting the teachers.’
• (IIL97) ‘strengthens us as a group.’
• (IIL125) ‘I’m trying to think what else I can do for these ladies … to reduce the amount of frustration.’

Trust refers to the trustworthiness and caring, as well as honesty, between group members (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). Trust among group members is an important requirement for effective teamwork (Salas, Sims & Burke, 2005). The value the team places in confidentiality is apparent in the data:

• (FGI) ‘confidentiality is awesome in the group’ (P6L205).
• (FGI) ‘we back each other up a lot’ (P2L208).
• (IIL13) ‘I allow them to vent; I tend to get a little bit more out of the team than I need because they have an opportunity to say what they are thinking.’

Trust could again be identified when I observed the way the coordinator opened the meeting and introduced me to the members; I observed how the members seemed to take her opening as a way of trusting me as she said:

• (OB) ‘having a different atmosphere when a district official walks in you are actually relaxed that has made a very big difference for me in the past two years, my heart does not start rattling’ (L4-6).
Stringer et al. (1992, p. 93) maintain that a coordinator should possess intrapersonal skills, which involve being an effective listener and being supportive towards fellow members. They state that interpersonal skills are also important as they relate to the relationship between the coordinator and her team members. These skills therefore align with Oldacre’s (2012) invitational dispositions. Oldacre states that care may be regarded as the most important aspect of Invitational Education. She observes, moreover, that ‘it can be argued that a person’s level of care influences her beliefs, attitudes and, resultantly, all her interactions with others.’ The ability to care affects the coordinator’s willingness to persevere, to overcome obstacles and to vary her coordination strategies. The collaboration and care of the team members in the current study is evident below:

- (FGI) ‘I agree totally with what she says, it’s like we are against the rest of the school’ (P3L76).
- (FGI) ‘you know we will work together’ (P2L210).
- (OB) coordinator allows her about a minute to vent and then calmly interrupts her to start talking about ways forward. The coordinator shows compassion with the member and also mentions that she feels helpless at times but that solutions need to be looked at…..
- (II)-(L14) ‘I allow them to vent; I tend to get a little bit more out of the team than I need because they have an opportunity to say what they are thinking, what they are feeling.’
- (II)-L45) ‘method of protecting the teachers.’
- (FGI) ‘I won’t get into trouble for what I have said’ (P6L203)

From the findings above, it is evident that this group has formed emotional bonds of friendship, affection, and genuine care for one another, which have made them a very close group. It would therefore be fair to say that the team is socially cohesive.

### 3.6.2 Empowerment

Empowerment within the SBST helps members to improve their self-confidence; it boosts their feelings of satisfaction at work, and of overall self-satisfaction (Edwards, Green & Lyons, 2002). Empowering members raises their level of professionalism and helps them to become responsible for their involvement in the decision-making process (Bogler, 2005). Moreover, empowering SBST members causes members to
progress through empowerment processes and allows for the delegation of power (Kuhnert, 1994; Masi & Cooke, 2000).

From the analysis of the data, it is clear that members were empowered, thereby allowing them to take decisions and solve problems, ensuring them the utmost confidentiality in carrying out their tasks, and providing unconditional support which would influence feelings of trust in their own ability and could lead to a process of personal development (Borko, 2004). Members of the teams clearly articulated these sentiments:

- (FGI) (P6L205) ‘confidentiality is awesome in the group.’
- (FGI) (P2L208) ‘we back each other up a lot.’
- (OB) When members discuss educators that are not supportive it shows transparency with one another and trust within the group.

Participants of a study by Avidov-Ungar (2014) held a strong desire to be active; they were committed to the task and ready to do whatever was necessary in order to succeed. Avidov-Ungar (2014) states that such feelings “charge” the teachers and afford a catalyst for their commitment to the position and to the motive of empowerment generated in them.’ My study reveals that the team under study is committed and will do whatever is necessary in order to succeed:

- (P6L127) ‘you sit till 2 or 3 o’clock at night because you are busy with support.’
- (OB) the coordinator came to the meeting prepared as she had a copy of the minutes as well as a list of learners to be discussed in the meeting.
- (OB) the whole team is encouraged to discuss a plan of action for each learner. Each member can contribute to the learner being discussed.
- (OB) She asks a member ‘can I ask you to get signs’ for the toilets; she therefore passes some responsibility to other members.
- (II)-(L53) ‘a method of empowering the ladies in the team.’
- (L60) ‘I try to develop the members that is here.’

Part of the coordinator’s responsibility is to initiate members’ development with the goal of better supporting learners and educators. The coordinator should ensure that group needs are met and that all team members understand their roles and responsibilities. According to Hackman (2002, p. 27), teams in which members know each other’s strengths, weaknesses, expertise and abilities perform better than those
that lack this knowledge, allowing them to become ‘highly skilled in coordinating activities, anticipating one another’s moves, and initiating appropriate responses even as those moves are occurring.’

SBST members in the current study are ‘given opportunity to report back about learners who are battling’, which is also a form of voicing concerns. A functional team creates a space for input from all members, and this provides a space for multiple perspectives to be applied. The coordinator in the study allows members to take control of certain tasks; for example, in the SBST meeting it was observed that she handed over the responsibility for toilet signs to a member of the team. She therefore delegates responsibility to team members. Each member is also given the opportunity to contribute their opinions freely in the meeting and the whole team is encouraged to discuss a plan of action for each learner (OB).

As the leader of the SBST, the coordinator should anticipate the development of team skills such as a common purpose, cooperative problem solving and coordinating activities (Elliot & Sheridon, 1992, p. 325). In the individual interview with the coordinator, she discusses empowering the ladies (L53) and developing them (L60). This concern with the development of team skills is also evident in the focus group interview when participant 6 says, ‘I do get the help that I need from within the group’ (L188). I also observed the coordinator allowing members the space to vent their frustrations as well as laugh and joke to ease the tension.

- \( IIL85 \) ‘I also look at the shortest route to the best solution for the child.’
- \( II \) (L53) ‘a method of empowering the ladies in the team.’
- \( L60 \) ‘I try to develop the members that is here.’

The interaction in the group relates to the group environment, and depends on the free expression of feelings, ideas and thoughts (Zhang, et al., 2007, pp. 1722-1730). Thus, if the group environment allows members to voice their opinions and concerns, then the group will easily communicate about achieving their goals. According to Heredero et al. (2015), interactions amongst group members should be recognized as a ‘more spontaneous form of coordination.’

From the data analysis, it is clear that this coordinator has a positive attitude and a tendency to always treat people with respect. She genuinely cares and her members
therefore trust her. She intentionally allows them the space to voice their opinions and intentionally empowers them in order to strengthen the SBST. The consistent, intentional behaviours of the coordinator of this SBST, as identified from the findings of the analysis, can be related to the two significant themes identified earlier in this section – cohesion and empowerment – as presented in table 3.10.

**Table 3.10 Categories of coordinator behaviour identified in relation to the two main themes of cohesion and empowerment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of behaviours</th>
<th>Cohesion</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• She gives undivided attention</td>
<td>• Allows members to voice their concerns and opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaboration and care</td>
<td>• She allows for shared goals and decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• trust and transparency in group</td>
<td>• She gives them roles and responsibilities E.g. (in charge of a grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• she meets the group’s basic needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• she allows for shared goals and decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7. RELATING DISPOSITIONS OF COORDINATORS TO VIEWS ON COORDINATION AND FUNCTIONING IN ORDER TO PROPOSE AN INVITATIONAL DISPOSITIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SBST COORDINATORS

After analysing and collating the literature I focused on conceptualizing coordination and then moved on to conceptualize dispositions (Section 2). Subsequently, I analysed the data and came up with relevant themes (as discussed above). As one of the objectives of the study was to elicit and describe SBST members’ current views and experiences of the functioning and coordination of the SBST, I now intend to discuss their views on the dispositions, in particular the invitational dispositions, of the coordinator, exhibited in her functioning as the SBST coordinator in a SBST perceived to be functional in a primary school in the Ekurhuleni South district.

Focusing on the Invitational Disposition Framework developed by Oldacre (2012), I support her conception of the hierarchy of invitational dispositional abilities. I would
like to articulate the importance of the first dispositional ability of ‘caring’. The coordinator, to be effective, requires the ability to care for herself/himself, for others and for the learner. According to Oldacre, without this most important ability the other four dispositional abilities have no basis for functioning. Shields (2003) similarly states that groups work better in an environment that is caring and supportive because members feel safe, respected and valued. Gordon, Benner and Noddings (1996) define caring as ‘a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection empowerment, and human community, culture and possibility’ (cited in Swart & Oswald, 2012). In my opinion if the coordinator does not care for herself she will not be able to care for others nor for the profession. In the case of the coordinator in this study, the coordinator does endeavour to address this issue on different levels for instance physically, emotionally and spiritually. This care can be seen in the following data obtained from the individual interview:

- (L156) ‘I have a debriefing session at least once a month.’
- (L152) ‘I train four times a week and I do voluntary work.’
- (L170) ‘a lot of positive books ……. attend at least one motivational talk per year.’

The second ability in Oldacre’s (2012) hierarchy is the ability ‘to act intentionally.’ This is with regard to the perceptions, words and actions of the coordinator. Acting with intentionality implies that one does things for a purpose that one can articulate and that one acts with intention upon this purpose. The coordinator in this study acts intentionally by allowing her members to talk freely, by showing respect and by intentionally developing her members. Indications of such intentional actions are:

- (IIL14) ‘I allow them to vent; I tend to get a little bit more out of the team than I need because they have the opportunity to say what they are thinking, what they are feeling.’
- (IIL130) ‘I’ve experienced that only if teachers serve on the SBST do they understand the importance of a piece of paper.’
- (IIL60) ‘I try to develop the members that is here.’

The remaining three invitational dispositional abilities of trust, respect and being optimistic about potential and opportunities (Oldacre, 2012) are also clearly identifiable in the findings from the analysis. The coordinator in this SBST trusts her
members by allowing them to represent a grade, respects them by allowing them the
space to vent in meetings, comes prepared for meetings and is optimistic by going
the extra mile for the learners:

- (IIL67) ‘I tend to treat them with respect and especially when they are older than I
  am, I will never address them by name.’
- (IIL93) ‘Maintaining eye contact with them is a form of acknowledgement and
  respect.’
- (IIL85) ‘I look at the shortest route to the best solution for the child.’
- (IIL30) ‘very cautious not to drop one of those most important cases.’
- (IIL140) ‘I don’t expect from the teachers unless I have set the tone.’

As postulated in section 2, according to Oldacre (2012), invitational dispositional
abilities can be forthcoming in three definite life-areas of the coordinator; namely, the
areas of self, the other, and the profession. In an attempt to integrate the findings
from the data according to these areas within an Invitational Dispositional
Framework, I have produced a framework for the training of SBST coordinators
which could act as the basis for a more detailed intervention programme offered at
district level. The framework is offered in Figure 3.11.
3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have analysed the biographical data, the closed-ended items and the open-ended sentences from the survey. I then analysed all the interview data, field note data and all documents relating to the study. I sorted them into categories and identified themes by way of inductive qualitative content analysis. I then
discussed the two main themes identified and related the themes to existing theory. Furthermore, I attempted to relate the consistent behaviours of the coordinator to the identified two themes, and eventually related these behaviours to an Invitational Dispositional Ability Framework. I concluded with a broad framework for invitational dispositions along three areas of functioning – namely the self, the other, and the profession – which will warrant more intensive research to ascertain more specific behaviours and dispositions for the purposes of training SBST coordinators at district based level in the future.

In the next chapter I will summarize my findings, draw conclusions, offer recommendations for practice and further research, and finally reflect on the strengths and limitations of the study.
SECTION 4
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section I will provide a summary of my findings and conclusions. I will then make recommendations for practice as well as recommendations for further research. I will go on to discuss the strengths and limitations of this study before providing a final conclusion.

4.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to describe the dispositions, particularly the invitational dispositions, of a SBST coordinator in a SBST perceived to be functional in a mainstream primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District.

From the outset, I identified the characteristics of functional teams. The team under study has a clear purpose, which is to address and support learners with barriers. I then explored whether the team’s contributions to the SBST were consistent with the team’s purpose, abilities and attitudes. I observed the roles team members play, and concluded that these roles were understood by all the members. In addition, I conceptualized suitable leadership; Michan & Roger (2000, p. 203) state that ‘when leaders delegate responsibility appropriately, team members become more confident and autonomous in their work.’

Closed-ended questions and open-ended sentences were consolidated together in one document, and were used to gather data from the SBST members and coordinator. The data was then coded to find common patterns leading to possible themes. Following this, further data was collected from observing a SBST meeting and a focus group interview. From this point it was possible to analyse the data from a broader perspective, and I therefore decided to conduct a further individual interview with the SBST coordinator to gather additional information regarding her dispositions. This enabled greater validity. In addition, I emailed my transcriptions to
the coordinator to distribute to the team members so that they could verify that I had transcribed their words correctly.

Once the data was analysed from the various data sources, it became clearer that there were certain consistencies between the findings of the closed-ended questions, the open-ended sentences, the focus group interview, my observations and the individual interview. The first consistency indicated genuine care. The coordinator has a strong ability to care for the team members, learners and profession. When one considers the consistent ability to care, evident in all the data sources, it is clear that an effective SBST coordinator must possess the invitational disposition of care for her/himself, the profession and others.

From the survey, with respect to functionality, I found the team to be highly efficient. Most respondents stated that the SBST at their school was hardworking, effective, supportive and functional. The team met regularly, had common goals, and worked towards achieving desired results. I also found that, with regard to coordination, the coordinator performs her role well as she allows members to each have a role within the SBST, thereby empowering them. Each member coordinates and monitors support within a specific grade and is then responsible for reporting back at weekly SBST meetings.

After further analysis, I observed the level of commitment and coordination that goes into coordinating such a team. From the outset of this research I stated my intention to use Oldacre’s (2012) Invitational Dispositional Framework to investigate if the SBST coordinator could display behaviour consistent with the framework.

I observed many incidences of care. The coordinator cares about her members, the learners and the community. She displays openness and warmth, which can be seen in my observations, the way the members of the team describe her, and her individual interview. I would therefore say that good coordination is evident in a team like this, where there is openness, caring and commitment. The coordinator is also committed to her role and is respected and liked by members; she is described as supportive, sympathetic, respectful and dedicated.
Michan & Roger (2000, p. 205) describe coordination as the ‘orderly interpersonal actions required to perform complex tasks.’ They observe, moreover, that throughout a team’s development its coordination needs will vary. Shared understanding of the team’s purpose facilitates coordination and the team members therefore recognize the benefits of teamwork.

With reference to Oldacre’s (2012) framework, when we consider the three areas of self, others and the profession, the data sources reveal that the coordinator under study has a natural ability to care for others, especially her ‘ladies’, as she calls her SBST members. She also has a natural ability to care for what is in the best interest of the children. Oldacre (2012) states that ‘whilst the ability to care initiates the interaction, intentionality serves as the driving force required to establish positive relationships.’ This coordinator has a high level of the dispositional ability to care, which means that she is able to ‘carefully consider the situation in which she finds herself, then intentionally select the most suitable course of action.’ In addition, my observations led me to believe that this care always arose from the coordinator’s intentionally inviting manner. It was clear from the individual interview that the coordinator cares for herself psychologically by attending debriefings and motivational talks, and reading motivational books. Physically, she cares for herself as she trains four times a week (see table 3.5).

Considering the values of respect, trust and optimism (see figure 2.6) I can confidently state that this coordinator respects the profession: she attends workshops, and submits data, referrals and other information on time. She also shows respect to her members on the team. She trusts them enough to put them in charge of a grade and gives them the space at meetings to report back on their findings and on the progress made with the learners and parents. She respects the DBST by attending meetings, apologizing if she cannot make meetings and submitting referrals on time. She really enjoys her job as coordinator and coordinates well, thus contributing to a functioning SBST. She also trusts her members. As Michan & Roger (2000, p. 204) have observed, trust must be built among team members who have different ‘competencies, assumptions and priorities, through developing confidence in each other’s competence.’
The biographical details of the participants highlight the significance this study attaches to years of experience in the education field. These educators have made teaching their career for life and so they have come to respect, trust and bond with each other as team members. This, I believe, has also contributed to the team’s functionality. It is, I believe, not only good coordination that leads to a functional team but also the bonding that takes place between members. As Ilgen (1999, p. 526) argues, ‘bonding reflects affective feelings that team members hold toward each other and the team. Whereas trust represents a willingness to work together on the task, bonding goes beyond trust and reflects a strong sense of rapport and a desire to stay together.’

The members of the team are committed to the profession; thus they are committed to each other and genuinely want to make a difference in the children’s lives. They therefore share common goals. There is trust and transparency within the group as they feel free in meetings to express how they feel about other educators who are not supportive or completing documents. I would therefore state that the team shares responsibility for the functioning of the SBST as it is not the coordinator alone who is responsible for the functioning of the team.

The coordinator gives each member responsibilities so that she can develop/empower them, and this is important. This was evident in my observations, the focus group interview and in the individual interview in which the coordinator talks about empowering ‘the ladies.’

4.3 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research represents a small-scale study and is therefore limited in terms of the sample size. I only focused on one SBST and therefore information gathered is context specific, which means that it cannot be generalised and that it does not reflect the thinking of all the SBSTs in the Ekurhuleni South district.

Moreover, I recognize my position as a novice researcher and the influence this may have had on my interviewing skills and the analysis of the data obtained. During the interviews I could have probed more intensely into some of the participants’ responses in order to gain a more thorough understanding.
Having started out with a qualitative research approach I was, however, able to gain in-depth insight into SBST members’ views and experiences of the functioning and coordination of their SBST. Because this study was conducted with a single case sample, it was also possible for me to build an open and honest relationship with the SBST members. It was therefore less-intrusive for me to approach the team and ask clarifying questions if I needed to. This allowed me to monitor the data collection as well as the data collection processes and follow up in terms of data.

Although data collection was not exhaustive, I had a broad range of data sources for the study and all the data was effectively used. Having adequate and diverse data from different data-sources allowed me deeper understanding into the issue of coordination of an SBST, and assisted in informing further support structures such as DBST concerning further supporting the SBST members’ wellbeing and providing training for SBST coordinators.

A limitation that I have to acknowledge is that I did not collect data on the culture and race of the members and how this might have affected the functioning of the team.

At the beginning of the study I thought that interviewing my colleagues at school level would be a limitation because I am a district official and this raises the issue of objectivity and researcher bias. However, this appeared to be a strength as I was able to see what the SBST’s frustrations were; they also knew that my presence in the ISS unit would provide a voice for them because I have the resources to decrease some of their frustrations. They knew, moreover, that my research would not only represent their frustrations, but all SBST members who have the same kind of frustrations. I did not have to gain the trust of my participants as I already had a working relationship with the coordinator and her opinion is highly valued by her members. She introduced me as someone she felt at ease with, unlike other district officials (see FGI); she acknowledged me as part of her support network, enabling me to gain the members’ trust.

Reflecting on the survey, I should clarify that the scale ‘agreed, moderately agreed and strong agreement’ may have been difficult for certain members to interpret because ‘moderately agreed’ is actually less of an agreement than ‘agreed’. In retrospect, I realize that the two categories should have been swapped around. But it should be acknowledged that whether ‘moderately agreed’ or ‘agreed’ is chosen, it
still indicates agreement. I therefore acknowledge the limitation but do not think that the limitation has had an effect on the views of the participants as their views were still in strong agreement. In future I would rather recommend a four point scale, providing the research with two sides that clearly state ‘strongly disagree’, ‘disagree’, ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’. This would have been a better scale.

Lastly, I have completed this study as part of my training to become an Educational Psychologist. Being a district official could have had an influence on the data interpretation, display and discussion. Although I attempted to detach from the study, I have to acknowledge that I am a district official and so data may still have been influenced by my thinking. In addition, this study was engaged within an interpretive paradigm. The outcome therefore signifies my understanding of the participants’ points of view and may therefore not be free of my own biases and assumptions. To limit the biases I used a small group and used open-ended questions in order to gain a better perspective of my survey topic. I was therefore less likely to overlook options that may have been important to the participants. I also made sure that I clearly defined the participants’ requirements for meeting my survey objectives. In addition, I was specific in my reports and findings when referring to the group selected to participate in this research study. Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) as cited in Chenail (2011, p. 257) suggest that potential reasons for bias can include the degree of affinity researchers have with the population under study, including researchers being a member of the group themselves. I have been aware of this potential bias and have acted accordingly.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.4.1 Recommendations for further practice

The invitational dispositional framework developed for SBST coordinators in figure 3.7 clearly demonstrates that care is the foundation of the framework. Care, as defined by Swart and Oswald (2014, p. 552), is a ‘commitment of will to enter into a relationship with another. Such a relationship requires emotional and intellectual identification and the commitment to understanding others’ perspectives, thus creating hope.’ I propose that, before an educator gets elected as a SBST coordinator, the SMT and the DBST should use this framework as part of the criteria
for selecting a SBST coordinator. Furthermore, the use of this framework could be used in the training of SBST coordinators by district officials in order for coordinators to become more aware of their dispositions, as well as in developing them to coordinate a functional SBST.

As the literature reviewed in section 2 suggests, teamwork is a multifaceted phenomenon. It takes commitment and support from each SBST member to create effective teamwork. The coordinator should be appropriately skilled and possess invitational dispositions. Moreover, all team members need clear roles for the team to function efficiently. SBST members should be trained by DBST regarding the functionality of a successful team. The well-functioning teams could then mentor other developing teams.

The DBST in the Ekurhuleni South District needs to train all educators on the SIAS policy so that all educators are aware that the responsibility for the support of learners with learning barriers does not lie with the SBST alone (refer to table 3.2.3 Q11). The ISS unit of the district should specifically focus on training the SBST members because they are responsible for referral to the DBST (Section 1 and 2).

In addition, the coordinator and the members of the SBST are overwhelmed by the amount of cases they work with (refer to table 3.2.3 Q14 & Q20). I therefore recommend that the SBST coordinator have a maximum amount of 50% teaching so that the remaining time can be used on administration, referrals, support and counselling. In addition, the data has highlighted that the members of the SBST feel overwhelmed at times and overloaded with cases. They should therefore go for regular debriefing or counselling. DBST can refer members for free counselling through the GDE Wellness programme (see Section 2.2). This study has also found that SBST members are not paid for the extra work that they do. I therefore further recommend that they be excluded as much as possible from extra-murals so as to free up their time to focus on SBST matters. Incentives should also be put in place to motivate SBSTs to be functional. The SBST members feel that the work that they do is not seen as important (Table 3.2.3 Q11) by other staff members. I recommend that they have the support of the SMT when it comes to completing referral forms, follow ups, etc. The ISS unit could also have a workshop with all teaching staff explaining
the SBST roles and functions, as well as what is expected from every educator (see section 1).

As a general observation I would like to recommend that all newly trained educators should have Inclusive Education and Learning Support as compulsory subjects as these should be an integral part of educator training, especially for those educators wanting to be on the SBST. For the SBST members who do not have Inclusive Education and Learning Support as subjects, the SIAS training which will be provided by DBST in 2017 will assist them in better identifying and supporting learners with learning barriers.

4.4.2 Recommendations for further research

A follow-up study considering more primary schools within the district used for this study could yield supplementary findings to further develop the Invitational Dispositional Abilities framework as well as the criteria for functional and effective SBSTs.

The proposed framework for SBST coordinators (figure 3.7) could be used in further research to develop a more detailed Observation Schedule to guide intentional invitational behaviour. Research could be undertaken on how such a framework could be designed to be a peer- and self-assessment tool, a selection instrument for the purposes of selecting suitable SBST members and coordinators, and a staff development tool for the implementation of learning support in the broader school community for use by DBSTs and SMTs in primary schools.

Research into the functioning of SBSTs across a range of schools such as secondary mainstream schools, full-service schools and support centres may also allow for more particular and contextually appropriate criteria for the effective functioning of SBSTs, as well as the invitational dispositions of their coordinators.

4.5 IN SUMMARY

This study has examined the invitational dispositions of one SBST coordinator at one perceived functional primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District. The study emerged from the premise that invitational dispositions embodied in the coordinator would find their way into the functioning of the SBST. The findings in this study
alluded to a number of important aspects of a SBST team perceived to be functional. These aspects included:

- Cohesion: collaboration and care, shared responsibility, basic needs being met, trust and transparency, shared goals, commitment and respect, collegial communication and consensus container.
- Empowerment: Members have a voice, they trust, support and share responsibility.

The findings also indicate that the invitational dispositions related to the self, the other and the profession were clearly observable in the self-report of the coordinator. These dispositions indicated the coordinator placed a high value on Caring for the Other, as evidenced by the way she cares for her members by allowing them to vent in a safe space; and Caring for the Self, as evidenced by the fact that she attends debriefing and motivational talks. The findings also indicated the coordinator placed a high value on Respect for others, evident in the way she referred to the cleaner as ‘aunty ...’. A high value was also placed on Optimism and Trust as the coordinator trusted members to meet with parents in order to solve problems. Finally, it became clear from the findings that the Intentionality of the coordinator’s behaviour was a crucial force in building team cohesion, loyalty, commitment and perseverance. She managed to coordinate despite the lack of support from other educators that are not on the SBST. Some of her phrases indicate the way in which she exemplifies care, respect, trust and intentionality:

- (IIL136) ‘[get] people to do what you need them to do without being too pushy.’
- (IIL140) ‘I don’t expect from the teachers unless I set a tone’
- (IIL147) ‘there are times when I sit in the support meetings and I’m just the teacher.’
- (IIL139) ‘I have the advantage. I’m very organised.’

This disposition is crucial in the development of good coordination of SBST’s in any school context and should clearly feature as core in developmental workshops for coordinators, particularly when considering formalised support and development from District levels to mainstream primary schools in the context of this study.
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