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A collaborative approach among teachers to support the teaching of learners with visual impairment in the Foundation Phase

Abstract

In this article, we explore how collaboration between Foundation Phase teachers could address and support the teaching of Foundation Phase learners with visual impairments (VI). By actively involving teachers in the research process, teachers contributed to changes that promoted the inclusion and success of FP learners with VI. This qualitative study implemented participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) as the research design of choice. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling, and the action learning set (ALS) comprised seven Foundation Phase teachers. Data generation entailed three cycles. Cycle One was relationship building, i.e. forming a shared vision for our study, negotiating an ethical agreement, and then determining the specific challenges Foundation Phase teachers have to face. During Cycle Two, we determined how we could address and support the educational needs of Foundation Phase learners with VI. During Cycle Three, we determined the strategies and guidelines that Foundation Phase teachers may use to enhance the teaching of learners with VI. Data generation encompassed ALS discussions, photovoice and reflective journal entries conducted throughout the three cycles. However, this article exclusively focuses on the ALS discussions. Data were analysed using thematic content analysis to design action plans collaboratively by means of which to assist Foundation Phase teachers working with learners with VI. The North-West University (NWU) and the Department of Education of the Western Cape (RSA) granted ethical clearance. The two themes derived from the findings highlighted the crucial importance of collaboration among parents, caregivers, teachers, and stakeholders in addressing the educational needs of FP learners affected by VI effectively, while also highlighting the importance of working together in designing strategies and guidelines for teaching FP learners with VI.

Keywords: *action learning set, bio-ecological systems theory, foundation phase, learners with visual impairment, participatory action learning and action research*

1. Introduction

Inclusive education for Foundation Phase learners (7–9 years old) has long been a complex endeavour (Ramrathan & Mzimela 2016). Despite efforts, numerous barriers

persist, as highlighted by Miyauchi (2020). When teachers teach Foundation Phase learners with visual impairments (VI), they face many challenges, for example, a lack of infrastructure, of available resources, of access to assistive devices, and of staffing and training (Beere *et al*., 2017). Furthermore, teachers often lack adequate knowledge of how to support learners with VI in a Foundation Phase classroom (Morelle & Tabane, 2019). While the Education White Paper 6 (DBE, 2001) stated two decades ago that learners with VI are physically to be included in mainstream schools, it would appear that all classroom environments are not yet inclusive, and that many Foundation Phase classrooms and school playgrounds have not yet been designed to accommodate these learners (Morelle & Tabane, 2019).

In this study we[1] encouraged a collaborative learning environment where knowledge was co-created through shared experiences and reflections. The study aimed to bridge a methodological gap by illustrating the effectiveness of working together in designing strategies and guidelines for teaching FP learners with VI. Participants collaborated as equal partners in identifying challenges, designing interventions, and evaluating outcomes, which resulted in more meaningful and sustainable solutions. The aim was to motivate teachers to collectively explore solutions and develop guidelines for including learners with VI in teaching and learning activities.

2. Literature review: Teaching foundation phase learners with visual impairment

The pertinent literature suggests that teachers face numerous challenges in acquiring knowledge and collaborating with peers to support and include learners with VI (Opie, 2018). Fostering the inclusion of learners with VI requires proactive preparation to include them in teaching and learning activities, rather than reacting with accommodation only after challenges have been identified (Baepler, 2023). This can be done by concentrating on identifying all the difficulties and recognising the importance of adapting teaching methods (Kasebusha & Banda, 2021). FP teachers, however, may not always fully understand the challenges faced by learners with VI due to limited skills, training and support from the Department of Basic Education (Beere *et al*., 2017).

Safety, seating and assessment should be considered when laying out the classroom and when creating the setting and the atmosphere (Morelle, 2016). Usually, a learner with VI sits at the front of the classroom to be close to the teacher and the chalkboard the teacher uses. Seating can be adjusted according to the learner's visual abilities, and/or the lighting adjusted for maximum vision by task lighting, curtains and other obstructions, such as half-open doors (Landsberg, 2019). For learners with VI, half-open doors can pose a challenge as they may create unexpected obstacles or distractions. To address this issue, it could be helpful to install tactile or auditory cues near half-open doors to alert learners of their presence. It is also important to ensure that pathways leading to half-open doors are clear of obstacles and clutter. Setting up a buddy system in the classroom will furthermore help learners feel more at ease and it will give every learner an equitable chance at a meaningful education (Hawkins, 2023). A teacher-initiated buddy system encourages other learners in the classroom to be 'good friends' of the learner with VI (Le Fanu *et al*., 2018:22). In addition, it will provide social support and reduce feelings of isolation. The buddy system will foster a sense of belonging and facilitate social, academic and emotional development in the classroom.

1 In this paper the term 'we' is used to signify a collaborative effort between myself, serving as the primary researcher during the empirical study conducted for an MEd qualification in Special Needs, and my two supervisors.

The FP teacher can support learners with VI by adjusting curriculum materials, adapting assessment methods, modifying teaching approaches and making environmental accommodations (De Verdier, 2018). To accommodate FP learners with VI during assessments they can be given additional time to complete tasks (Negash, 2017). Assignments can also be adjusted to enhance accessibility for these learners, provided that teachers are knowledgeable about various evaluation methods and criteria (Morelle, 2016). Le Fanu *et al*. (2018) suggest several strategies, including allowing learners to complete assignments over multiple periods if necessary, reducing the number of examples required to demonstrate understanding of a concept or procedure, and simplifying the number of responses to questions.

Morelle (2016) states that a lack of parental engagement has a negative impact on a learners' development and academic success. A significant challenge faced by FP teachers teaching learners with VI is the limited involvement of parents or caregivers. Vos, De Beer and Niemczyk (2020) highlight that many parents are unable to offer any assistance to their children or the school community. To ensure the inclusion and support of learners, it is imperative for teachers to collaborate closely with parents or caregivers of these learners, aligning their efforts towards shared objectives.

As a newly assigned FP teacher, I encountered FP learners with VI in my classroom. I was uncertain about how to address their distinct needs and how to promote inclusivity, especially within an overcrowded classroom. Additionally, as a novice teacher I was unsure about how to engage parents effectively in supporting their children. Seeking assistance from my colleagues posed more challenges, as many seemed unsure about how to offer effective support. We echoed the idea of Skae, Brown and Wilmot (2020) that no individual teacher possesses all the necessary skills to meet the diverse needs of learners within an inclusive FP classroom. I therefore perceived this research study as a valuable opportunity to engage collaboratively with colleagues, sharing our expertise and skills to co-create guidelines aimed at supporting and enhancing outcomes for young learners with VI. In exploring the role of the FP teachers in teaching learners with VI, Bronfenbrenner's (1979b) bio-ecological systems theory was used.

3. Theoretical framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979b) theory suggests that different interacting systems both directly and indirectly influence a learner's development. Bronfenbrenner (1979b) distinguishes between the following systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem.

By utilising Bronfenbrenner's (1979a) theory, this study sought to provide an understanding of the various factors influencing the educational experiences of young learners with VI. The intention was to offer insights into effective collaborative strategies to support the teachers within the complex and interconnected educational ecosystem. As the microsystem focuses on the immediate environment in which the learner interacts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b), this study explored factors within the microsystem such as the FP-teacher–FP-learner interactions, classroom dynamics and parental involvement that influenced the learner with VI. The mesosystem focuses on interactions between different microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b) and this research examined how collaboration and communication between the teachers, parents, educational specialists and other stakeholders influenced the support and

services provided to support young learners with VI. The exosystem encompasses external environments that indirectly affect the learner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b) and this research investigated how external factors such as access to specialised support services or funding for assistive technology influenced educational opportunities. The macrosystem involves broader cultural and social influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b) and this research investigated the perceptions of the community and educational policies that shaped the educational opportunities of learners. The chronosystem considers the dynamic nature of development and how it unfolds over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b), and in this study the needs and challenges faced by young learners with VI and their teachers were explored.

4. Research methodology

This qualitative research aimed to explore how collaboration between teachers could address challenges in teaching Foundation Phase learners with VI, and how to promote support through active collaboration. Qualitative studies, as highlighted by Goodyear and Bundon (2021), aim to construct theories that deepen our understanding of social phenomena through rich experiential insights. In this study, a participatory transformative paradigm was used. Wood (2020) argues that such a paradigm actively involves all stakeholders in a research process and allows them to take ownership of the issues and solutions related to the research. By fostering a collaborative learning environment where knowledge was co-created through shared experiences and reflections, this paradigm promoted a collective effort towards social change. In line with this approach, the PALAR research design was implemented. In PALAR the participatory action learning aspect (PAL) provides for an action-learning process in which group members reflect on their collaborative learning, while the action-research aspect (AR) provides a framework for generating data, for data analysis and interpretation within each cycle (Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). By incorporating collaborative insights and actively shaping the agenda for improvement rather than solely analysing the situation, PALAR allowed us to incorporate collaborative insights and actively shape improvement agendas, as advocated by Asghar (2013).

The site was a primary public school in the Western Cape. The school has ten FP classrooms accommodating an average of 35 learners per class. Each classroom includes at least two learners with VI, with one learner in the Grade 3 class unable to see beyond one metre. Situated in an economically disadvantaged neighbourhood, parental involvement was hindered by socio-economic challenges, poverty and transportation limitations.

Maree and Pietersen (2017) state that purposive sampling is used where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind. Seven teachers were purposively selected in accordance with the following criteria:

- The teachers had to be able to communicate and understand Afrikaans;
- They had to be qualified Foundation Phase teachers with a degree in Education; and
- Possess at least two years' experience of working with learners with VI.

Purposive sampling allowed us to gain in-depth insights from the teachers who are knowledgeable and experienced on teaching learners with VI. In Table 1 the biographical information of the participants from the school is provided:

Table 1: Biographical information of the participants from the school

Participants	Age category	Gender	Number of years teaching
Participant 1 (P1)	40–50 years	Female	30 years
Participant 2 (P2)	30–40 years	Female	8 years
Participant 3 (P3)	20–30 years	Female	3 years
Participant 4 (P4)	30-40 years	Female	6 years
Participant 5 (P5)	20–30 years	Female	4 years
Participant 6 (P6)	30–40 years	Female	5 years
Participant 7 (P7)	40–50 years	Female	28 years

The action learning set (ALS) comprised seven participants ranging in age between 20 and 50 years. An ALS is a small group of people that provide a supportive environment to address challenges, learn from experiences and develop practical solutions (Wood, 2020). Donohue and Bornman (2014) remind us that when it comes to teaching visually impaired learners, older teachers may be just as inexperienced as their younger colleagues.

According to Wood and Zuber-Skerritt (2013), in PALAR data generation occurs progressively, and addresses each of the research questions. We employed three cycles, each consisting of four sessions lasting 60–90 minutes, to explore and address the research questions. Data generation involved ALS discussions, photovoice and reflective journal entries conducted throughout the three cycles. This article, however, focuses on the rich insights gleaned from the ALS discussions, which provided unparalleled depth and breadth compared to the other data-generation methods used. During Cycle 1, the first meeting of the ALS included a start-up workshop, aimed at establishing the structure of the group, to build relationships, addressing participant needs and engaging in discussions to define their respective roles and responsibilities. After engaging in relationship-building activities, the ALS identified the challenges faced by teachers by addressing the first question:

What are the challenges that teachers face when teaching Foundation Phase learners with visual impairment?

Cycle 2 started with reflections on Cycle 1 to discuss new needs that had arisen and also to maintain a participatory relationship. This reflection involved data generation, analysis, suggestions and gaining a collective understanding of the first cycle, as outlined by Kearney, Wood and Zuber-Skerritt (2013). In Cycle 2, the ALS addressed the second research question:

How can a collaborative effort between teachers address and support the educational needs of learners with visual impairment in the Foundation Phase?

The teachers addressed and discussed the educational needs of Foundation Phase learners with VI during this cycle. Afterwards, they explored and reflected on how to address and support the identified needs collaboratively. Moreover, the participation of a specialist was organised to assist the ALS in finding ways to support the educational needs of Foundation Phase learners with VI.

Cycle 3 continued by reflecting on the data gathered in Cycle 2. Questions and concerns not resolved in the second cycle were explored and aspects that needed to be changed were then discussed.

During Cycle 3, the ALS addressed the third and fourth research questions:

What collaboratively developed strategies can assist teachers to address the challenges they face when teaching Foundation Phase learners with visual impairments?

What guidelines for collaborative teacher support can be derived from the findings to enhance teaching Foundation Phase learners with visual impairments?

During Cycle 3, the teachers focused on collaborative efforts between teachers to develop strategies and to construct guidelines that can assist them when teaching FP learners with VI. Thematic analysis enabled us to identify, analyse and report on patterns within the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This approach encouraged the participants to engage actively in data analysis to ensure that the research study was not guided solely by our personal interpretation, but by the collaboration within the ALS. According to Connelly (2016), *trustworthiness* can be defined as the validation of data, of the interpretations and of the methods used, and how these guarantee the quality of the study. The integrity of the research was guaranteed by following the quality criteria outlined by Herr and Anderson (2014), namely the validity of the results, the validity of the process, the democratic validity, the validity of the catalysis, and the validity of the dialogue.

Respecting the participants and fostering a relationship of trust are important aspects of ethics. To ensure ethical practices, approval and permission were obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education (Edu-Rec), NWU and the Department of Education, Western Cape. Following the guidelines suggested by Wood (2020), we further respected the values of equality, humanity and mutual respect by the signing of an ethical agreement (Wood, 2020). The ethical agreement acknowledged the following ethical principles, as outlined by Wood (2020):

- All participants are equal.
- Listening to one another's point of view, and
- Fostering of partnership in the production and sharing of knowledge.

By formalising these principles through an ethical agreement, the ALS highlighted its commitment to collaborative knowledge creation.

In the next section the findings will be discussed.

5. Findings

The participants' exact statements were used to reflect the authenticity of the gathered data. The members of the ALS were assigned codes P1 to P7.

In the next section two of the overarching themes that emerged from the data will be discussed (see Figure 1). Each theme is supported by pertinent literature and verbatim statements.

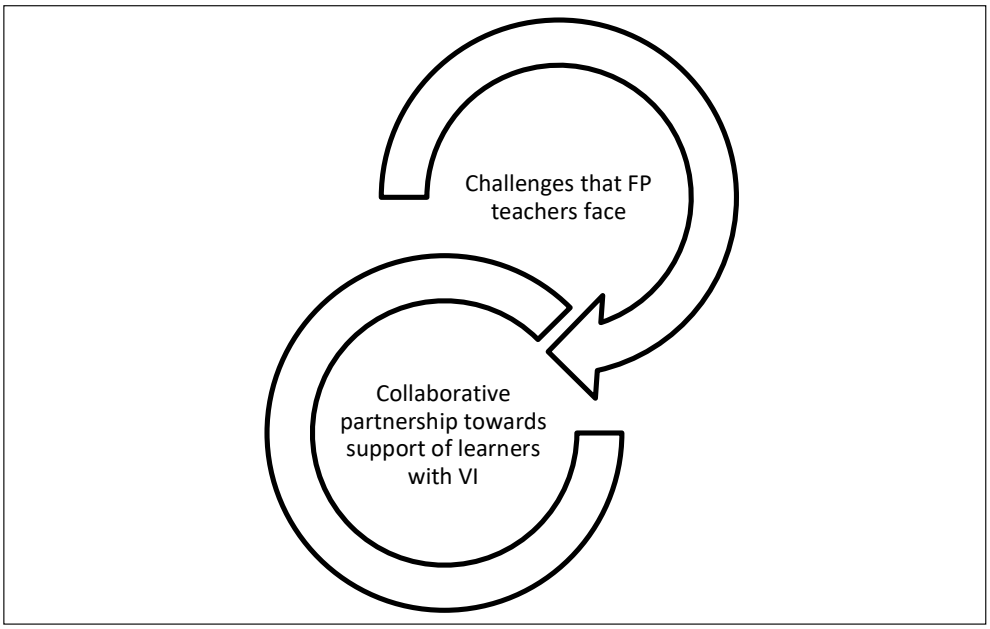

Figure 1: Two themes that surfaced from the data

5.1 Theme 1: Challenges that teachers face when teaching learners with visual impairments

It appears as if teachers lack knowledge as to how and where to find relevant professionals with whom to create a working relationship. Teachers explained that they had neither the knowledge nor the skills to identify learners with VI and that they needed to collaborate with stakeholders or professional people, for example, an optometrist, for assistance. Participant 1 expressed this need:

> *I wish I knew someone that I could ask, like the town optometrist or a nurse, to come and test all the learners in the Foundation Phase for visual problems. And to come and talk to the teachers about signs they could look for, and what to do when you identified a problem with their sight, but there is no one at our school that is trained to do this* (P1).

Participant 3 agreed with these sentiments, emphasising the importance of obtaining help as soon as possible:

> *It would be ideal to get a specialist with the knowledge of visual problems into our class to just walk around and observe the children and look for problems or impairments. Even if the professional could come to the school for a period of three days to observe the learners. In the end, this partnership can only help us and make our work easier, because then we have an early start on the problem, and we can talk to the parents and ask them to take the child for tests* (P3).

The importance of equipping teachers with skills, attitudes and knowledge to implement inclusive education successfully is highlighted by Loreman, Deppler and Harvey (2010). The findings corroborate with these authors and Participant 3 expressed her feelings of uncertainty about teaching Foundation Phase learners with VI:

> *I think another thing is a lack of knowledge. Sometimes I am not truly sure because I don't have the knowledge of teaching learners with visual problems. Or if it is identified, I am not always sure how to handle every situation in class* (P3).

Besides teaching confidence, teachers also have many responsibilities and struggle to complete tasks outlined in the curriculum on time. The teachers stated that they also did not have adequate teaching aids and resources. They were concerned that when problems remained unresolved in the early stages of learners' academic careers, these learners would encounter more serious problems later. The challenge is that the parents of these learners lack the necessary funds to either support their children by sending them for eye tests or even to have their study materials enlarged – something that the schools are unable to do.

Learners with VI also have differing needs. Some of these learners need specialist services, which most parents cannot afford. Participant 5 put this into perspective:

> *I had to take my son to get his vaccines and we walked out that day and it cost us R1 000 – and that is not even a specialist. The learners in our classes don't even have lunch for school* (P5).

The financial aspect significantly influences the development of learners, particularly those with VI. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders in the community could contribute to the holistic development of learners. However, incorporating a community requires a mindset shift among all responsible for the functioning of the school (Damons, 2017). To incorporate these ideas, the ALS partnered with a local Specsavers to initiate a project offering free eye tests for learners under 12 years old, but the affordability of glasses remained a concern.

The first cycle provided a thorough understanding of the contextual backdrop within the research environment. This insight allowed us to grasp the reasoning behind the teaching approaches adopted by the participants, thereby enabling us to comprehend their needs and frustrations as articulated during the ALS sessions.

5.2 Theme 2: Collaborative partnership towards support of learners with VI

Ferreira and Sefotho (2020) argue that a successful partnership between families, schools and communities requires values like mutual trust and compassion, constant communication and a sharing of ideas, agreement on goals, and a sense of common accountability. The teachers agreed that during a partnership they can work together towards supporting and addressing the educational needs of learners with VI:

> *We as teachers need to be versatile, we should not do the same thing time after time. I think we should learn from each other. So, I think it would be nice if we took turns to go and watch the other teacher teach her learners. In this way, we can learn from each other* (P4).

P2 agreed and continued by highlighting the importance of teachers taking time to engage in discussions where they can openly talk about the challenges they face in their work:

> *It is important for teachers to make time to just sit and discuss the things that they struggle with. Someone may just have some knowledge of your situation or even experience of how to handle the situation* (P2).

It became clear that tailored strategies are essential for teaching young learners with VI, as they promote inclusive and effective instruction and fostering holistic development. This idea is supported by Kasebusha and Banda (2021), who emphasise the significance of individualised teaching methods, emphasising the direct influence on the engagement of learners with VI. Furthermore, Morelle (2016) argues that the classroom layout ought to be neat and well-organised, ensuring that the spaces between tables are not congested, to facilitate smooth movement for the learners. P1 agreed and explained,

> *I also don't move anything around, as it might confuse the learner. If I do move something, like my dustbin, which I had to move this week, I make sure to show the learner where it is, and I ensure that it is still easily accessible* (P1).

Learners with VI may also have limitations in accessing visual information which can affect their ability to learn through traditional visual methods. Therefore, seating arrangement in the classroom holds significant importance (Colclasure, Thoron & LaRose, 2016). Typically, these learners are seated at the front of the classroom to maintain proximity to both the teacher and the blackboard (Negash, 2017). Participant 1 emphasised the importance of clear verbal communication when instructing learners. Being near the teacher allows these learners to observe facial expressions and hear instructions more effectively.

While the seating arrangements of learners with VI is very important, providing learners with a classroom atmosphere that encourages them to learn is equally important. As many such learners rely on sound for extra signals to grasp material and context, teachers should pay attention to acoustics and sound management to create a calm atmosphere (Landsberg, 2019). Negash (2017) considers silence in the classroom to be very important in assisting such learners in general. Teachers could support learners by ensuring silence during assessments and activities, as this can contribute significantly to ensure a safe and relaxed environment. Participant 2 agreed and argued that playing music in the classroom could contribute to a relaxing environment. Some of the other participants explained how they created a relaxing classroom environment:

> *I use a motivational system. At the end of the week, if they have successfully gone through the system, they can come to my table and choose something from the treasure box* (P4).

> *I make use of an application called "bouncy balls". This app monitors the noise in the classroom and warns the learners when they are too loud. So, if they can keep quiet without any warnings, I give them five minutes of extra break time* (P1).

Using music or motivational systems to encourage silence in one's classroom during activities and assessments will enhance the teaching of learners with VI by contributing to a positive classroom environment. In addition to changing their attitudes, teachers should change, adapt and make use of certain learning materials, resources and electronics. For example, some learners with VI may need large-print copies of learning materials. These must be provided in convenient sizes and be of a consistent standard (Ferreira & Sefotho, 2020). The teacher also needs to allow learners extra time to finish their assignments, activities and class work. Participant 4 concurred, stating,

> *These learners in our classes also need readers and extra time to complete activities and assessments*.

According to Negash (2017), learners should be given additional time in accordance with their specific impairment, in this case, VI. The assessment should moreover comply with national prescriptions. Having a reader or assistant available at all times to aid learners with VI during activities is not always feasible. Therefore, teachers used the concepts proposed by Hawkins (2023) to implement a buddy system to address this challenge during activities. Participant 2 stated that teachers could perhaps use the buddy system to help learners with VI by re-reading questions and making sure that the learner understands the activities:

> *The buddy will help the learners with visual impairments during activities by making sure they understand the questions. This [buddy] learner should be a responsible learner. He/she just sees to it that the learner is on the correct pages and understands the questions. The buddy must be a learner who completes his/her work and understands what is expected of them in order to help the learner living with visual impairment.*

During Cycle 3, the participants emphasised the importance of the classroom environment. They mentioned how important it is to pay attention to the seating arrangements of learners with VI. They also pointed out the importance of using strategies, like listening to music and using applications, and to keep the class quiet so that learners with VI are better able to focus.

Members of the ALS highlighted the fact that collaboration between teachers and parents plays a vital part in providing support and addressing the educational needs of learners with VI. It is the teacher's responsibility to identify concepts and skills that the learner has not yet mastered and to work with both learners and their parents to support them (Morelle & Tabane, 2019). Participant 6 argued that if parents and teachers collaborate, the workload becomes much lighter:

> *Last year I had a learner in my class who is living with visual impairment. And, I must say, it was so much easier because I had the full support of my parents. They made my work so much easier, and I knew that I could count on them. They always showed up for meetings. They enlarged his reading books. When I informed them of concepts he still hadn't mastered, they put in more work at home* (P6).

When teachers collaborate with parents or caregivers, it helps to reduce and eliminate the barriers to the inclusion of all learners in the Foundation Phase classroom (Negash, 2017):

> *Regular feedback is also important from both sides. If something [has] happened at the school, inform the parents and likewise, the parents should inform the teacher if something [has] happened at home* (P2).

Participant 2 suggested that when teachers encounter uncertainty in addressing the educational needs of learners with VI, they should seek guidance and support from their colleagues who possess relevant expertise. Nevertheless, there are instances where the knowledge and experience of other teachers may prove inadequate, necessitating practical assistance within the classroom setting. P3 explained that (teacher) assistants play a crucial role in supporting learners to modify materials and resources (P3). P1 further elaborated,

> *Having assistants in our classrooms means that you as a teacher have two more hands and eyes in the classroom to support learners. This helps so much, because with our big classes it is not always possible to reach and help all the learners* (P1).

Participant 5 shared insights into the way the teachers at their school collaborated with the DBE following the initial ALS meetings during Cycle 1. Together they identified learners with VI and received support from the DBE. Subsequently, the DBE dispatched both an optometrist and four nurses to the school to learners with VI. This collaborative effort, facilitated by the DBE's support, allowed for the early detection of VI among learners at the onset of the academic year. Through this collaboration several learners with VI were identified and received the necessary assistance.

6. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to explore how a collaborative approach between teachers in the Foundation Phase could improve the teaching of learners with VI. The findings emphasised the significance of collaboration and understanding various systems to support FP teachers in their teaching of learners with VI. The findings also highlighted the importance of gaining insight into the learners' needs, thus facilitating better support strategies. In this section the research findings are contextualised within Bronfenbrenner's (1979b) bio-ecological system highlighting its potential in addressing challenges encountered by teachers in enhancing the teaching and learning experiences of learners with VI. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979a) bio-ecological systems theory, collaborative interactions between different systems such as teachers and stakeholders can enhance the educational outcomes of FP learners with VI. In this study, collaboration with parents and optometrists aided in the identification of learners with VI. Optometrists assisted teachers to identify learners early in the academic year, as noted by P5. It was clear, however, that integrating the stakeholders into the educational process necessitated a shift in the mindset of the teaching community, outlined by Damons (2017).

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's (1979b) theory suggests that collaborative engagement between the different systems such as the ecosystem and the learner can benefit young learners. It became clear that collaboration between the local stakeholders and teachers can have a significant impact on the timely identification of learners with VI, especially when parents face barriers accessing eye specialist services. Collaborative engagement between various systems, like the exosystem and the learner, enhances teaching and learning outcomes for FP learners with VI. Participants mentioned how local financial factors could influence the early identification of learners with VI, for instance if parents did not have the money to take their children to an eye specialist.

Moreover, collaboration between teachers, parents, caregivers and micro-systems as per Bronfenbrenner's (1979a) theory, can lighten the workload and facilitate the inclusion of learners with VI in the FP classroom. Participants stressed the importance of relations with parents, as keeping parents informed about their children's progress enables teachers to address and support the learners' educational needs effectively, as suggested by Negash (2017).

7. Conclusion

The research findings underscore the potential for collaborative efforts among teachers to enhance the educational experience of FP learners with VI. Through the ALS discussions, participants engaged in fruitful discussions on practical strategies aimed at supporting these learners.

Three conclusions were drawn from this study:

- Firstly, Foundation Phase teachers must recognise the diverse educational needs of learners with VI. Recognising the complex challenge encountered in everyday teaching, teachers should accept that they may not have all-encompassing solutions or expertise. Nonetheless, they should commit to accommodating and supporting all FP learners, including those affected by VI.
- Secondly, it is crucial for Foundation Phase teachers to foster collaborations with peers, stakeholders and the DBE. By forging partnerships with the DBE, the teachers can enhance their teaching practices and provide support to learners with VI. The findings, for example, highlighted the importance of provision of DBE assigned assistants to aid FP learners.
- Lastly, the implementation of tailored strategies and guidelines is pivotal for supporting learners with VI effectively. Through the adoption of such measures, teachers can navigate the educational landscape with greater efficacy, thereby ensuring optimal support learners with VI.

Considering the aforementioned points, the overarching finding of this study suggests that FP teachers have the potential to enhance their instruction for VI learners through collaborative efforts. Through this research collaboration, participants refined their teaching techniques and forged enduring relationships. They were equipped with the necessary resources to implement effective instructional strategies and recommendations. This study facilitated their development of adaptability and resourcefulness in teaching, while also fostering an awareness of the broader community impact of their pedagogical practices.

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