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Experiences of School-Based Support Teams in Supporting Learners With Learning Barriers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted schooling worldwide, with learners experiencing learning barriers being particularly affected. In South Africa, School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) are responsible for coordinating learner support, implementing inclusive education strategies, and facilitating referrals. Pandemic-related school closures, rotational attendance, and limited access to learning resources significantly altered how these support services were delivered. While existing studies have examined teachers' experiences during COVID-19, there is limited research focusing specifically on the experiences of SBSTs in supporting learners with learning barriers during this period. This gap highlights the need for focused research on SBST practices under crisis conditions. Based on the identified gap, this study aimed to explore the experiences of School-Based Support Teams in supporting learners with learning barriers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The specific objectives were to explore how the roles of SBSTs were adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic, examine the strategies employed by SBSTs to support learners with learning barriers during this period; and identify challenges encountered by SBSTs in providing effective learner support during the pandemic. A qualitative research approach was adopted to explore the experiences of School-Based Support Teams in supporting learners with learning barriers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were members of SBSTs and directly involved in learner support during the pandemic. The study sample consisted of 11 SBST members drawn from 11 public schools. Participants included SBST coordinators and SBST

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members. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and data saturation was reached when no new themes emerged.

Keywords:

School-Based Support Teams, Learners, Learning Barriers, COVID-19

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented disruption to formal teaching and learning worldwide, including in South Africa, where all face-to-face schooling activities were suspended following the declaration of a national lockdown on 26 March 2020 (WHO, 2021; Chitsamatanga et al., 2021). Teaching and learning were abruptly shifted to exclusively online modes during the lockdown phase, fundamentally altering instructional delivery, learner engagement, and support mechanisms within schools. Online education, defined as the delivery of learning materials via the internet to facilitate learner–learner and learner–teacher interaction (Dhull & Sakshi, 2017), became the primary mode of instruction. While online platforms allowed for synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022; Fabriz et al., 2021), this rapid transition exposed systemic inequities and significant limitations, particularly for learners with learning barriers.

In the South African education system, the pandemic did not merely interrupt classroom instruction; it uniquely disrupted established learner support structures, especially the functioning of School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs). SBSTs play a central role in identifying, assessing, and supporting learners who experience barriers to learning and development, in collaboration with District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs) (Department of Education, 2001; 2005a). However, COVID-19 regulations such as social distancing, movement restrictions, and school closures severely constrained the core operational mechanisms of SBSTs, which traditionally rely on face-to-face interaction, collaborative problem-solving, classroom observation, and direct learner engagement.

During the lockdown and post-lockdown phases, teachers were required to rapidly adapt to online teaching and alternative attendance models such as the platoon system (Havik & Ingul, 2021). These changes disproportionately affected learners with learning barriers, who often depend on structured routines, individualized support, and direct intervention from teachers and SBST members (Toseeb et al., 2020). The suspension of in-person schooling limited SBSTs' ability to conduct learner screening, implement intervention strategies, monitor progress, and facilitate referrals to DBSTs and external specialists. Consequently, many learners were not identified timeously and did not receive the necessary academic, emotional, or psychosocial support.

Furthermore, the functionality of SBSTs was undermined by restricted collaboration among team members and stakeholders. SBSTs are multidisciplinary structures comprising school principals, SBST coordinators, Heads of Department, referring teachers, School Governing Bodies, and external professionals such as occupational therapists, speech therapists, and social workers (Nong, 2020). COVID-19 restrictions curtailed meetings, consultations, and inter-sectoral collaboration, rendering many SBSTs partially or fully dysfunctional (Buthelezi, 2021). This breakdown in collaboration weakened

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coordinated support systems and had a ripple effect on the quality of education provided to vulnerable learners.

The introduction of home schooling and online learning further compounded these challenges. While some schools adopted digital platforms such as Zoom, Webex, Google Meet, and WhatsApp to maintain instructional continuity (Hasan, 2020), these platforms were often inaccessible or ineffective for learners with learning barriers. Many learners lacked access to devices, data, and assistive technologies, while others lacked the digital literacy required to benefit from online support (Ali, 2020; 2021). SBSTs, in turn, faced difficulties adapting their intervention strategies to virtual environments, as online support models often failed to accommodate diverse learner needs and promoted a “one-size-fits-all” approach (Hasan, 2020).

In addition to academic challenges, learners experienced heightened psychological and emotional distress due to isolation, bereavement, and prolonged home confinement (Idris et al., 2021; Chitimira & Hamadziripi, 2021). Under normal circumstances, SBSTs play a critical role in providing emotional reassurance, counselling referrals, and psychosocial support. However, COVID-19 restrictions prevented SBST members from reaching learners during periods when such support was most needed (Buthelezi, 2021). Compounding this challenge was the fact that many SBST members had not received adequate training from the Department of Basic Education to support traumatised learners or to respond effectively to crisis-induced emotional and mental health needs (Buthelezi, 2021).

Foregrounding the Knowledge Gap and Study Contribution

Despite the central role of SBSTs in inclusive education, there is a notable scarcity of empirical research that documents the lived experiences, challenges, and adaptive strategies of School-Based Support Teams during large-scale crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly within South African primary schools. Existing literature predominantly focuses on teachers’ instructional challenges and learners’ academic experiences, with limited attention given to the preparedness, functionality, and resilience of SBSTs in times of systemic disruption.

This study addresses this critical knowledge gap by providing an in-depth examination of how COVID-19 uniquely disrupted the roles and functions of SBSTs in supporting learners with learning barriers across selected South African provinces. By foregrounding the perspectives of SBST members, the study contributes original insights into the structural, operational, and emotional challenges faced by these teams, as well as the strategies they employed to navigate unprecedented disruptions. The findings aim to inform policy development, strengthen SBST preparedness, and enhance support frameworks to ensure continuity of inclusive education during future emergencies.

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Roles of School-Based Support Teams and COVID-19 Disruption

School-Based Support Teams are institutional structures established to support teachers and learners who experience barriers to learning at the school level. Their roles include identifying and assessing learning barriers, designing intervention and prevention strategies, facilitating referrals, and providing collegial and emotional support to teachers (Masango, 2013; Sethosa, 2001; Nong, 2020). Under normal circumstances, SBSTs rely on collaboration, problem-solving, planning, and interpersonal engagement to fulfil these responsibilities effectively.

The COVID-19 pandemic uniquely disrupted these core SBST roles by restricting physical access to learners, limiting collaborative engagement among team members, and constraining communication with DBSTs and external specialists. Learner identification and assessment processes were delayed or suspended, intervention strategies were difficult to implement remotely, and referral systems became fragmented due to restricted movement and limited service availability. The platoon system and blended attendance models further reduced opportunities for consistent learner monitoring and follow-up, thereby weakening the effectiveness of SBST interventions.

As Tsotetsi and Omodan (2020) observe, the rapid changes introduced by COVID-19 fundamentally altered the operational landscape of SBSTs, exposing their vulnerability to crisis conditions. While SBSTs attempted to adopt alternative approaches to support teachers and learners, these strategies were often constrained by inadequate resources, limited training, and structural barriers, rendering them partially ineffective (Buthelezi, 2021). This disruption highlights the need for strengthened institutional support, crisis-responsive training, and flexible support models to ensure that SBSTs can fulfil their mandate during emergencies

Methodology

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed data triangulation through the systematic integration of multiple qualitative data sources, namely written interviews (open-ended questionnaires), document analysis, and follow-up telephone interviews. Triangulation was implemented at both the data collection and data analysis stages.

Written interviews constituted the primary data source and were used to capture the experiences, perceptions, and understandings of SBST members regarding support provided to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. Document analysis served as a secondary data source and included relevant school-based documents such as SBST meeting minutes, learner support plans, referral records, and policy-related documents. These documents were analysed to corroborate, contextualise, or challenge the accounts provided in the written interviews.

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Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted selectively with participants to clarify ambiguous responses, probe emerging themes, and confirm preliminary interpretations derived from the written interviews and documents. This process enabled the researchers to verify consistency across data sources and to resolve discrepancies where participants' reported practices differed from documented evidence.

During data analysis, triangulation was achieved by comparing themes generated independently from each data source. Themes emerging from written interviews were cross-checked against documentary evidence and follow-up interview data to identify convergence, complementarity, or divergence. Only themes that were supported by at least two data sources were retained as robust findings, thereby strengthening the credibility and confirmability of the study (Shenton, 2004).

The qualitative data were thematically analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process. After familiarisation with the data, initial codes were generated separately for each data source. The researchers then compared coded data across sources to identify shared patterns and relationships. Related codes were clustered into categories, which were further refined into overarching themes that reflected the collective experiences of SBST members across the three provinces. This iterative process of comparison across data sources ensured that findings were grounded in multiple forms of evidence rather than a single perspective.

Findings

Theme 1: Collaboration and Adherence

One of the most important roles of the SBST which is imperative to organise activities for effective learning and teaching for learners with learning barriers is collaboration (Maphumulo, 2019). Participants in the study attest to this; '*They conduct meetings with a small committee comprising of a learner plus a parent and a teacher. Again, the teacher is invited through a formal invitation for an interview'* (School 9, participant 1); '*If the teacher is facing challenges regarding the learner with barriers, as a team we meet to discuss and solve the problem encountered and come up with different strategies to address the issue. If the issue persists, we invite a skilled teacher to intervene'* (School 10, participant 1); '*The HODs addressed the responsible teachers during spare time and the teachers would attend to the learners in small numbers in the classroom or individually if possible'* (School 6, participant 1).

Collaboration, in this instance, can be described as collaboration within the SBST, collaboration with the school and collaboration with the teachers. The SBST members clearly stated that collaboration was important for coordination in order to fulfil the mandates of the functioning of the SBST as shown by the following participant; '*The SBST during this pandemic have been collaboratively coordinate their work effectively and continued support to the leaners who were identified previously is in progress, and due*

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to the transition, more revised work was done as scheduled in the time table to allow leaners time and effort in the inclusion environment' (School 8, participant 1); 1). The SBST was also collaborating with the teachers as noted by another participant; '*SBST ensures that teachers support learners by doing extra classes for learners with barriers to learning'* (School 10, participant 1). This seems to show the SBSTs in the schools collaborate well within their structures, with the teachers and the learners with learning barriers.

The SBST members must work in collaboration with teachers to design SBST activities that will benefit all learners experiencing learning barriers and other needs. The SBST members participated actively in designing operating procedures during the lockdown and post lockdown as shown by the following participant: '*Given the importance of continuing to provide the necessary support that learners need whilst also containing the spread of COVID 19 in schools, each school must develop a relevant standard operating procedure to respond to the context specific issues'* (School 11, participant 1). The needs, interests and goals of learners inform accountability, collaborative decision making, responsibility and problem-solving initiatives. The SBST members would host meetings with the teachers and learners to come up with intervention strategies to needs of the learners with learning barriers as reported; '*During meetings on addressing problems relating to needs of the teachers and learners, meetings would be scheduled, and problems identified would be discussed in order to come up with solutions'* (School 11, participant 2).

In all the activities, the SBST always considered all learners and made sure that they are all equally involved as stated by the following participant: '*Because of the daily rotational time tabling, two different groups receive the same learning support to maintain COVID 19 protocols such as social distancing* (School 1, participant 1). Another participant noted that; '*At every staff/ phase meeting there is a lot for inclusive education'* (School 10, participant 1); '*Our SBST is guided by the year plan therefore we believe in a total inclusion hence our problem-solving meetings do seat, and minutes are kept strategizing new ways to include leaners during this pandemic. Our protocol towards problem solving is still effective as we screen the leaners and identify the problem so we can assess the leaners. In our meetings we at times develop new ways to solve problems to address needs of the leaners and educators so inclusive education continues'* (School 8, participant 1).

Collaboration includes all aspects of the SBST process where teachers share and, in the end, agree on certain ideas (Mphahlele, 2005). In order for the SBST to be able to achieve their goals and assist the learners with barriers, they needed to have face to face meetings as reiterated by the following participants; '*Meetings are held on a monthly basis to address concerns'* (School 10, participant 1); *'They hold briefing meetings if there is a case'* (School 9, participant 1)*; 'The meetings scheduled in our year plan are continuing because learners need to be included in our environment and those who were affected by the pandemic profiles are kept up to speed'* (School 8, participant 1); '*The SBST is having*

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regular meetings to check the activities of the learners with learning barriers and come up with a support program' (School 1, participant 1). The SBST followed and coordinated specified activities according to their calendar and year plan; '*He or she will coordinate work by referring to the name list of the team and their respective duties'* (School 6, participant 1); *'They follow their annual activity plan'* (School 9; participant 1). Planning skills are one of the most common and important skills needed by members of SBSTs to their optimal functioning. A plan presents broad, flexible guidelines that are followed towards a specific goal (Nong, 2020; Masango, 2013). For SBSTs to collaboratively accomplish their tasks, they require the following crucial elements: guidelines; resources; desired results; accountability and consequences (Mphahlele, 2005).

The SBST also collaborated with the parents of the learners with learning barriers despite the lockdown restrictions using alternative methods; '*Parents are urged to support their children by communicating through letters*' (School 10; participant 1). This shows that SBSTs believe that parents of learners with learning barriers should be more involved in their child's education, as well as in activities and daily operations of the school. The SBST, in conducting meetings, observed, followed and adhered to the COVID 19 safety precautions; '*During COVID 19, SBST will at least invite individuals to attend meetings based on the number of attendees following COVID 19 regulations depending on the size of the space available*' (School 6; participant 1); '*Making sure that SBST committee members are observing day to day guidelines/ protocols of COVID 19'* (School 11, participant 2). It seems the SBSTs were able to work as a team including the teachers and learners with learning barriers. A team can accomplish much more than individuals on their own, through collaborative consultation that is problem solving oriented, creating a positive and caring educational environment (Nong, 2020). Teamwork involves professionals who possess unique skills and orientations, having a common purpose, working together co-operatively to solve a common problem. In this case, the SBST members have a common goal, which is to give support to learners experiencing barriers in learning and development thus promoting inclusive education and accommodating diversity making it possible for all learners to access the curriculum (DoE, 2002). The key elements of team skills are a common purpose, cooperative problem solving and coordination of activities (Maphumulo, 2019). This seems to be prevailing in the SBSTs in the schools as their common drive is to accommodate the diverse needs of learners by sharing intervention strategies and coordinating activities by having contact sessions with learners experiencing learning barriers via extra classes and remedial work.

Theme 2: Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are an important component of any system. It is an activity which is carried by the individual (self-evaluation) as well as by peers, colleagues or supervisors (peer evaluation) (Niyivuga *et al.,* 2019). The SBSTs carry out monitoring and evaluation periodically as indicated by the following participants: '*The year plan for the SBST is followed and feedback is given to staff and SMT*'

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(School 1, participant 1); '*SBST members draw an activity plan and adhere to it. They keep a minute book and keep file with records of learners with needs'* (School 9, participant 1); '*Through a designed template/ checklist, keep records and track achievements with given timeframe'*s (School 11, participant 2).

The purpose of a specified checklist/ activity plan is to guide the SBSTs so that they address set objectives as per given timeframe whilst minimising digression. Evaluation is of importance since it gives a record of what would have transpired, it checks whether all the objectives/ goals were achieved and SBSTs can formulate ways of improving service delivery for enhanced effectiveness in supporting learners with learning barriers. This was noted by the following participant: '*The SBST coordinator does deal with the evaluation of duties done in our school. Normally, there is sharing of duties and delegation to proactive members and that works out as tasks come with deadlines/ due dates. As members, we would sometimes do peer to peer development. This activity normally is led by the ones who would have attended the staff development meeting during the year'* (School 1, participant 1).

Theme 2: Challenges

The theme relates to challenges experienced by SBSTs in implementing the intervention strategies to address the problems encountered during the COVID 19 phase. Several challenges were encountered as expressed by the following participants: '*Challenges experienced are a high rate of absenteeism which causes learners to regress. A trimmed curriculum leaves out some important concepts. Rotational timetabling leaves teachers exhausted because of repetition of lessons. A high drop-out rate and school attendance apathy. Lack of interest to do their homework*' (School 1, participant 1); '*The SBST is faced with scarcity of resources and the infrastructure in place does not include the leaners with disability especially given the fact that our schools are full-service schools. More challenges are of those who were tested positive once bringing forth the issue of ventilation in our classrooms and we have raised these concerns in the leaners profile. The SBST also faces a challenge of parental involvement during this pandemic and the school is guided by circulars in the era where we can't allow many people in and out of the school as there might be a spread of the virus, hence not enough advocacy is done'* (School 8, participant 1). Parental involvement is also a challenge since they seemed uncooperative in enforcing home schooling and most of the parents are not able to assist the learners at home because they are illiterate. Parents were also withdrawing learners from school*" Behind every young child who believes in himself is a parent who believed first"*

The COVID 19 pandemic extensively disrupted the curriculum as indicated by the following participant: '*Trimmed curricular in which some important aspects are left out; Limited face to face with parents and utilize newsletters instead to communicate; Rotation attendance in which some learners are not coping to the best of their ability and teachers assistance is limited; Fear & anxiety disturbs learners' peace of*

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mind; Unavailability of the School Social worker' (School 9, participant 1). This shows that the subjects' curriculum had some critical components removed and this detracts from acquisition of certain skills. The timetables had to be changed with dual sessions per day (rotational timetables) to minimise the number of learners congregating at one go and observe social distancing in classrooms. Rotational timetables also affect the teachers because they would be physically exhausted by the end of the day by the workload. Most of the pupils were failing to cope with the limited interaction time with the teachers and the pedagogical methods which were being used to facilitate teaching and learning, especially the learners with learning barriers.

The COVID 19 pandemic was encouraging truancy among the learners as expressed by the following participant: '*Absenteeism-the learners come to school as the please/ want. They do not come to school as required. Learners would neglect their work (not doing homework/ assignment) and taking advantage of the pandemic'* (School 10, participant 1). The other challenge faced by the SBSTs was the failure of the learners to adhere to the COVID 19 safety regulations as indicated by the following participant: '*Learners were not wearing their masks properly, not sanitising as required by the guidelines and they would wear torn masks and they were not observing social distancing'* (School 11, participant 1). In other instances, there was lack of collaboration and support; for example, learners with learning barriers would not get the required help and support after being referred as reiterated in this case: '*SSBT would identify learners and refer then to the relevant institutions, but learners would not usually get the help they need after they have been referred'* (School 11, participant 2).

Theme 3: Intervention Strategies and Support

During the COVID-19 pandemic, School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) experienced significant challenges in service provision and therefore implemented various intervention strategies to address barriers to learning, particularly learner absenteeism and school dropout. One of the primary strategies involved strengthening parental involvement through letters, phone calls, and other communication channels to encourage learners to return to school. As noted by one participant, *"Involving the parents by letter or other communication to encourage the learners to attend school. They were also doing home visits by sending one of the staff to enquire why the learner was not attending school especially those who live close to the school"* (School 10, participant 1). This strategy was effective in improving learner attendance and reducing truancy in some cases, as increased parental involvement supported learner re-engagement. However, its effectiveness was limited by inconsistent parental responsiveness and socio-economic challenges that constrained parents' ability to support learners consistently.

Home visits were used alongside parental communication to establish reasons for prolonged absenteeism. This approach enabled SBSTs to gain insight into contextual factors such as illness, bereavement, and household responsibilities, thereby informing targeted interventions. While home

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visits contributed to learner re-engagement, they were resource-intensive, posed health and safety risks during the pandemic, and could not be implemented consistently for all learners due to staffing and time constraints.

Another strategy identified was the use of digital communication and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) tools to maintain contact with parents and other stakeholders. One participant stated, *"We can overcome this notion by implementation of 4IR to have continuous communication with parents and other relevant stakeholders. And we might overcome these challenges if the DBST could play its active role and ensure more training to the teachers and SBSTs"* (School 8, participant 1). Where access to technology was available, this strategy supported continuity of communication during lockdowns. However, limited access to digital devices, poor connectivity, and insufficient training reduced its overall effectiveness.

SBSTs also facilitated psychosocial support for learners and teachers who experienced trauma and stress following COVID-19 infections and deaths within school communities. As one participant explained, *"Teachers and learners received psychosocial support from professionals to deal with trauma and stress after positive COVID-19 cases including death of learners and staff"* (School 1, participant 1). This support was effective in promoting emotional wellbeing and enabling teaching and learning to continue. Nevertheless, reliance on external professionals limited the sustainability of psychosocial interventions, as support was often short-term and not accessible to all learners in need.

The provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitation support was another key intervention. Participants reported support in the form of masks, sanitisers, and school disinfection following positive COVID-19 cases, *"Companies that support the school with provision of PPEs such as masks and disinfection of the school after a positive COVID-19 case"* (School 1, participant 1). Similarly, *"Support is given in the form of workshops and the districts offer sanitisers to schools. The department of health does support in terms of conducting some COVID-19 related test if must be"* (School 8, participant 1). These measures were effective in increasing perceptions of safety within schools and reducing fear of infection. However, inconsistent supply and dependence on external stakeholders constrained the long-term effectiveness of this strategy.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration was also central to SBST intervention efforts. Different stakeholders played specific roles in learner support, as outlined by one participant: *"Circuit Manager – monitors compliance of SBST; Parents – comply by taking learners to referred hospital (health centre); Teachers – submitted lists of learners with barriers; conduct remedial lessons; Caregivers – visit the homes of learners for evaluation and intervention; Adopt a Cop – visit learners' homes for interventions"* (School 9, participant 1). This collaborative approach strengthened referral systems and promoted shared responsibility for addressing learner barriers. However, coordination among stakeholders was uneven, and SBSTs remained dependent on external support, which at times delayed interventions.

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The importance of stakeholder support was further emphasised by another participant who stated, *"I think there is no way which the SBST can be productive without stakeholders' support during the COVID-19 lockdown and post-lockdown phases"* (School 11, participant 1). While stakeholder involvement contributed to maintaining learner engagement and support during the pandemic, limitations such as inconsistent parental support, limited resources, rotational timetables, and reliance on external stakeholders constrained the SBSTs' ability to fully meet learners' needs.

Discussions

With regards to collaboration, the SBSTs seem to be working well with the different stakeholders in assisting leaners with learning barriers. The teams call meetings, give feedback and interact with parents to be effective in-service delivery. The SBSTs also offer support to the teachers who would be facing challenges offering support to learners with barriers. The SBST seem to be informed of their roles and responsibilities since they have drawn up checklist/ activity plans and check lists to guide them in service provision. However, the SBSTs faced several challenges in implementing their strategies due to the COVID 19 pandemic lockdown and restrictions. They came up with intervention strategies which seemed quite effective in helping them achieve their set goals which included doing home visits to encourage learners to keep on attending school and enhancing parent involvement. A few recommendations are suggested to improve functioning of the SBSTs. The SBSTs require more training and workshops as well as information sharing sessions to get feedback on activity plans. The SBSTs greatest strength lies in collaboration, and they are encouraged actively stakeholders within and outside the school.

Conclusion

The advent of COVID-19 pandemic changed the way SBST were conducted their support to learners with barriers. Four themes emerged from the study, The study found out that the successes of the SBST depended on its strong collaboration with other stakeholders such as the parents, teachers, and the social service providers. The collaboration was crucial in enhancing the work of SBST at the height of the COVID 19 pandemic. The SBST managed to build teamwork that was associated with positive results such as creation of a conducive environment for assisting learners with learning barriers. The study unpacked that the SBST understood their roles through application of the SIAS policy and SALAMCA conference documents. As a result, the SBST managed to carry out its major duties effectively. The SBST managed to screen, identify, and assess learners with learning barriers. Wherever there was need of referral they played their part. Resources are of paramount importance for the SBST to carry out its duties. The resources that the SBST depends on the needs of each learner or schools. The resources are required to conduct teaching in inclusive classroom. The other necessary resource required was the manpower within the school and outside the school. Outside the school the SBST

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requires the support from stakeholders in the QTLC such the police, social workers, nurses, service providers and the community at large. The study found out that monitoring and evaluation is crucial on checking on the progress of SBST in carrying out its mandate. The SBST had to put measures for evaluating their yearly activity plan. There are challenges faced by SBST at the height of COVID 19 pandemic. The challenges uncovered were absenteeism, high drop out. The curriculum was trimmed therefore the other important aspects of content was left out. The other challenge faced by the SBST was lack of support from some of the parents.

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