

Training teachers to identify barriers to learning: A complexity perspective

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1 October 2015

The presentation at a glance

- Introduction
- The initiative
- Our reflections on the process
- Questions & answers

Introduction

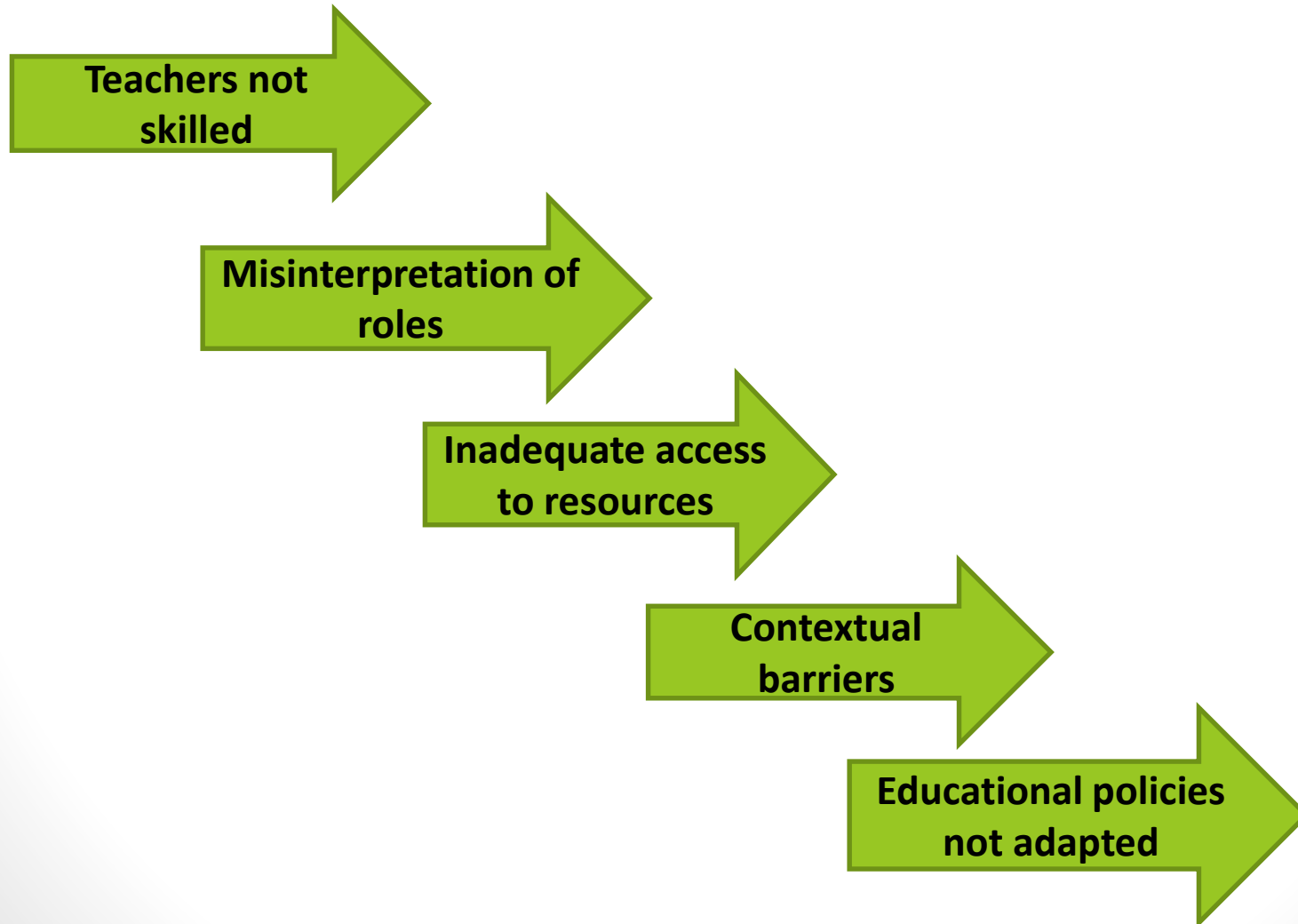
The dream

- **Inclusive school communities that**
 - takes responsibility to promote effective learning
 - by creating conducive and supportive learning environments within which
 - ✓ learners feel appreciated
 - ✓ the curriculum and teaching support learning
 - ✓ the uniqueness of every learner is understood

(Swart & Pettipher, 2011)

The reality

Why has it been impossible to reach the dream?



Purpose & aim of presentation

- **Purpose of the presentation**

To contribute to the conversation about reaching the dream amidst the challenges

- **Aim of the presentation**

To reflect on our involvement as consultants in an initiative to enhance learners' holistic development in six schools in Franschhoek with specific reference to the implementation of a support process and the consequences for teacher training for inclusive education

Theoretical perspectives

- **Holistic well-being perspective**

Holistic well-being refers to a positive state of affairs of individuals and communities in which their personal, relational and collective needs are met (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007; Prilleltensky, 2005, 2007, 2012)

- **A complexity perspective**

Dynamical / unpredictable / non-linear – cause and effect not necessarily clearly distinguished / small changes can make a large impact / constant change / relational / self-organising / emergence / connectedness / networks (Jörg, 2009; Mason & Morrison, 2002; Osberg, Biesta, & Stacey, 2001, 2007; Shaw, 2002)

The initiative

Context

Rupert Education
Trust

CCYF
at
NWU

5 Primary school
2 Secondary schools

Franschhoek schools
support initiative

A socio-economically challenged
environment with limited
resources despite the affluence in
the region

Initiation into the process

Timeframe	January 2013 - April 2013
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consulting the needs analysis conducted by the larger project
RET	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attending initial planning meetings with the various stakeholders• Meet with support teams/ staff at the schools to explain the initiative

Our involvement (1)

Timeframe May 2013 - December 2013

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultations with staff on the support needs of the school & the course of the facilitation process in their context• Decision to focus on support needs of learners who are perceived as "having difficulties to achieve"• Developed a referral process – single form to be completed by 63 teachers• 316 forms received between 6 schools |
|----------------|---|

Our involvement (2)

Timeframe	May 2013 - December 2013
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="511 511 1593 735">• Studying the referral forms & developing a matrix to provide basis for planning support<li data-bbox="511 772 1439 835">• Analysing & capturing the data<li data-bbox="511 872 1580 1006">• Follow up discussions with teachers who referred learners

Image 1: Referral form (pg. 1, 2 of 3)

REFERRAL FORM

DATE: _____

LEARNER DETAILS:

Surname	
Full name	
Date of birth	
Age	
Gender	
Home language	
Grade	
Class teacher	
Class size	
Grades repeated	
Medication	

Your input is very valuable to us to understand the learner's academic and social/emotional functioning, within the school context. Thank you very much. Please answer the following questions:

1. Explain the circumstances in which the learner lives. With whom/context/problems experienced and assets.

2. How involved and cooperative are the parent(s)/guardian(s), or how can they become more involved with the learner?

3. What do you think is the learner's problem? Give as much information as possible.

4. How serious is the problem? Make a mark in one of these boxes. A scale is used from 1—5.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Needs attention | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Urgent attention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Attention within the next 6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Immediate intervention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Attention within the current school term | |

5. Who is concerned about the learner? Mark the boxes that fit.

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent(s)/Guardian(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Class teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> The learner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer group | <input type="checkbox"/> IRT team | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |

6. Describe the problem. What happens daily in the classroom and on the playground?

7. What do you think is the cause of the problem?

8. Why in your opinion does the learner need support?

9. What has already been done by the school and the parent(s)/guardian(s) to support the learner? Mark the boxes that fit.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contact with parent(s)/guardian(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion with the learner | <input type="checkbox"/> Learner's support/Extra lessons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychologist/Psychiatrist | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor | <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational/Speech therapist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment | |

Other (specify): _____

10. What do you think can still be done, or done to support the learner?

11. What do you see as the learner's strengths?

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LEARNER'S FUNCTIONING:

ACADEMIC

1. What do you think is the learner's ability/potential to perform in school? (Please note: Not current performance, but the potential to perform in school). Mark the box that fits.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Above average | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Average |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below average | |

2. Do you think that the learner performs according to his/her potential as marked on the previous page? Please motivate your answer.

3. If the learner performs below average, what do you think are possible reasons for this? Mark as many boxes that you think is true.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited ability | <input type="checkbox"/> Illiterate | <input type="checkbox"/> Unmotivated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disorganised | <input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect school/class placement | <input type="checkbox"/> Not ready for school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with vision (Eg. Struggles to write from the board) | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with hearing (Eg. Does not listen to instructions) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited vocabulary | <input type="checkbox"/> Language confusion | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited study methods |

Image 1: Referral form (pg. 3 of 3)

2. Do you think that the learner performs according to his/her potential as marked on the previous page? Please motivate your answer.

3. If the learner performs below average, what do you think are possible reasons for this? Mark as many boxes that you think is true.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited ability | <input type="checkbox"/> Illiterate | <input type="checkbox"/> Unmotivated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disorganised | <input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect school-/class placement | <input type="checkbox"/> Not ready for school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with vision (E.g. Struggles to write from the board) <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with hearing (E.g. Does not listen to instructions) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited vocabulary | <input type="checkbox"/> Language confusion | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited study methods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slow work speed | <input type="checkbox"/> Memory problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete homework |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Struggles to work independently | <input type="checkbox"/> Concentration/Attention | <input type="checkbox"/> Hyperactive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive (E.g. Does not follow instructions) <input type="checkbox"/> Shy (E.g. Does not participate in class discussions) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading: limited sight word recognition / comprehension / reading speed / pronunciation / replacements / refusals / insertions / reversals | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maths: addition / subtraction / multiplication / division / number concept / grasping basic concepts / anxiety | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling: unfamiliar with letter sounds/ reversals / spells phonetically / language confusion / spelling rules | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other subjects | | |

Other comments:

EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL

1. What do you think is the learner's emotional/social functioning? (You can refer to emotional stability; self-acceptance; emotional sensitivity; stress; anger; aggression; rebelliousness; relationship with friends, teachers, parent(s)/ guardian(s); trauma; serious behavioural problems).

2. If any serious problems in terms of the learner's emotional/social functioning are experienced, please describe these problems with as much information as possible.

Other comments:

Thank you for your time in completing this form.

Name and Surname
(Teacher completing this form)

Signature

Image 2: Matrix for the support plan

STUDENT PROFILE OVERVIEW /2013

Surname		Full name			
No.	Themes	+	-	Notes	Support already offered
1	Attention to intervention	1 2 3 4 5			
2	Home circumstances				
3	Support by parents				
4	Grade(s) repeated	R 1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
5	Attention/Concentration				
6	Behaviour				
7	Extra materials				
8	Friends/Peers				
9	Hearing				
10	Homework				
11	Independence				Summary
12	Language confusion				
13	Maths				
14	Memory				
15	Motivation				
16	Potential	BA A AA			
17	Reading				
18	School/class placement				
19	School readiness				
20	Self-confidence				
21	Spelling				
22	Stress/Anxiety				
23	Studious				
24	Study methods				
25	Vision				
26	Work speed				
26	Writing				

STUDENT PROFILE OVERVIEW /2013

Nature of the support needed	Sources of support	Action steps

Image 3: Referral form in GoogleForm

Referral Form ☆

File Edit View Insert Responses (110+) Tools Add-ons Help All changes saved in Drive

↶ ↷ Edit questions Change theme View responses View live form

▼ Form Settings

- ☐ Show progress bar at the bottom of form pages
- ☐ Only allow one response per person (requires login) ?
- ☐ Shuffle question order ?

Page 1 of 1

Learner Referral Form

Your input is very valuable to us to understand the learner's academic and social/emotional functioning, within the school context. Thank you very much. Please answer the following questions:

Date form completed

Month ▼ Day ▼ 2015 ▼ 31

Please select your school*

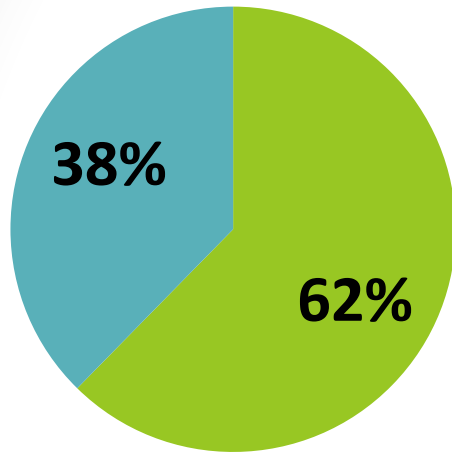
- ☐ XXX
- ☐ XXX
- ☐ XXX
- ☐ XXX
- ☐ XXX
- ☐ XXX

Processing the data

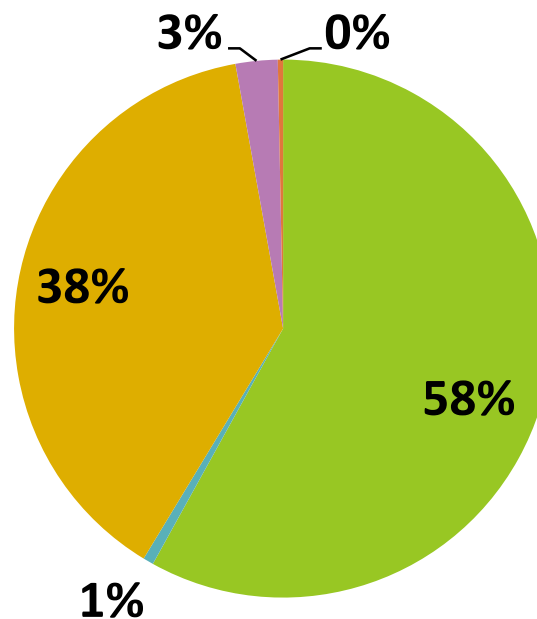
Information obtained from the referral form:

- Home circumstances of learners
- Parental attitudes & ability to support
- Learners' problems as perceived by the teacher
- Seriousness of the problem i.e. need for attention
- Manifestation of the problem in class and out of class
- Possible reasons for the problem
- Why support is needed
- What has been done to support the learner
- What should still be done in the teacher's opinion
- What are the learner's strengths according to the teacher
- Brief overview of the learner's mental ability as perceived by the teacher

Gender & Home language

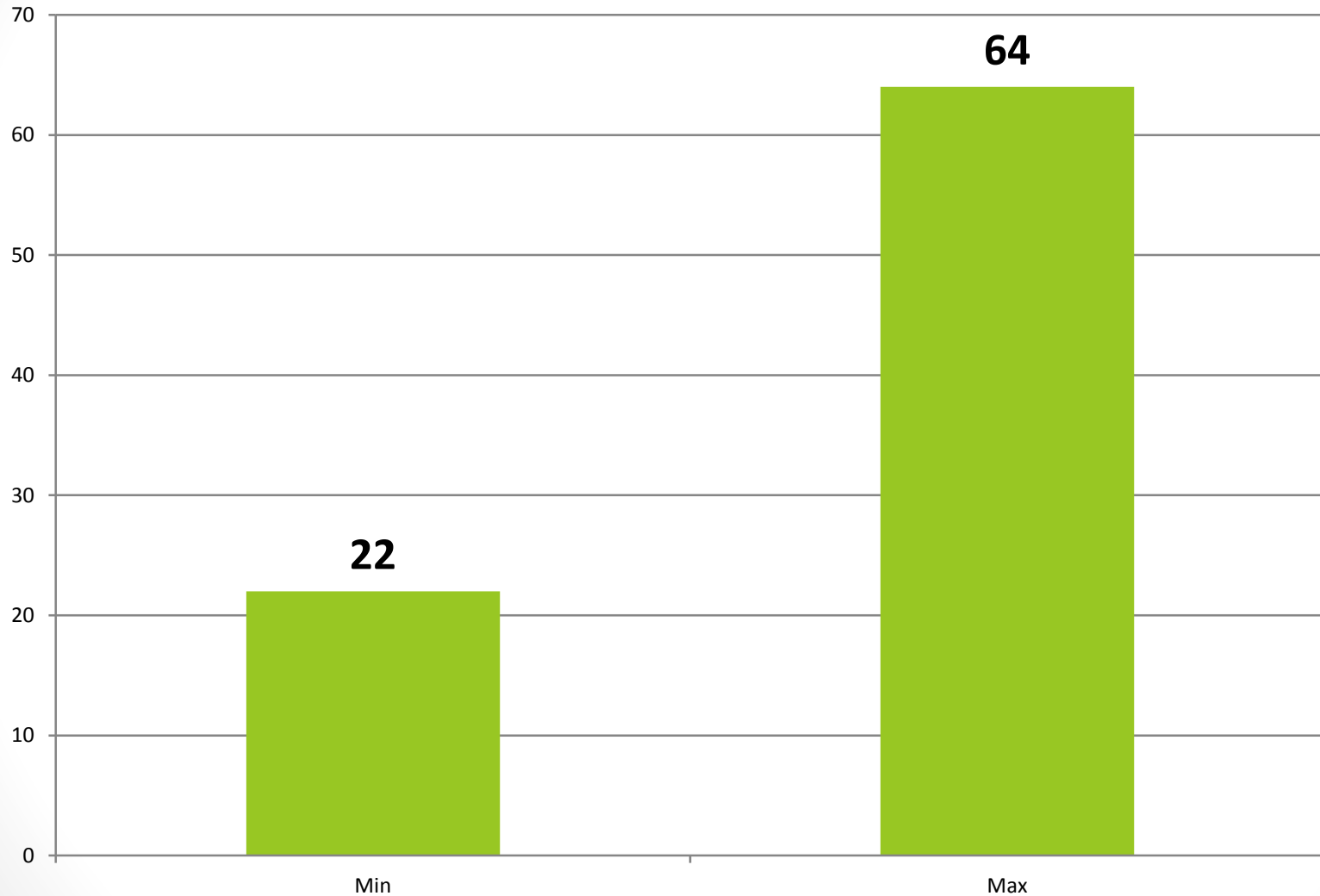


■ Male 197
■ Female 119

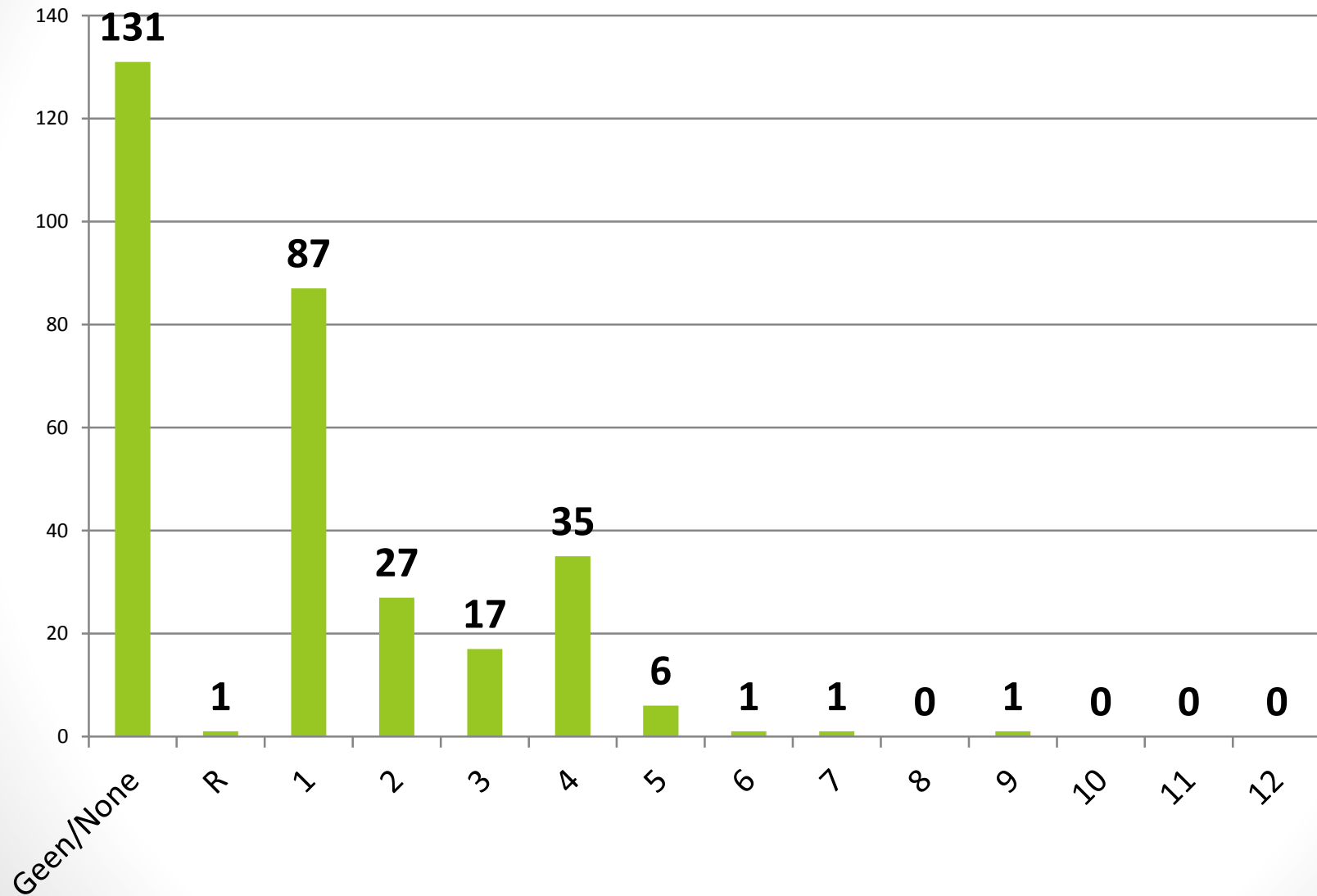


■ Afrikaans 184
■ English 2
■ Xhosa 122
■ Sotho 8
■ Other 1

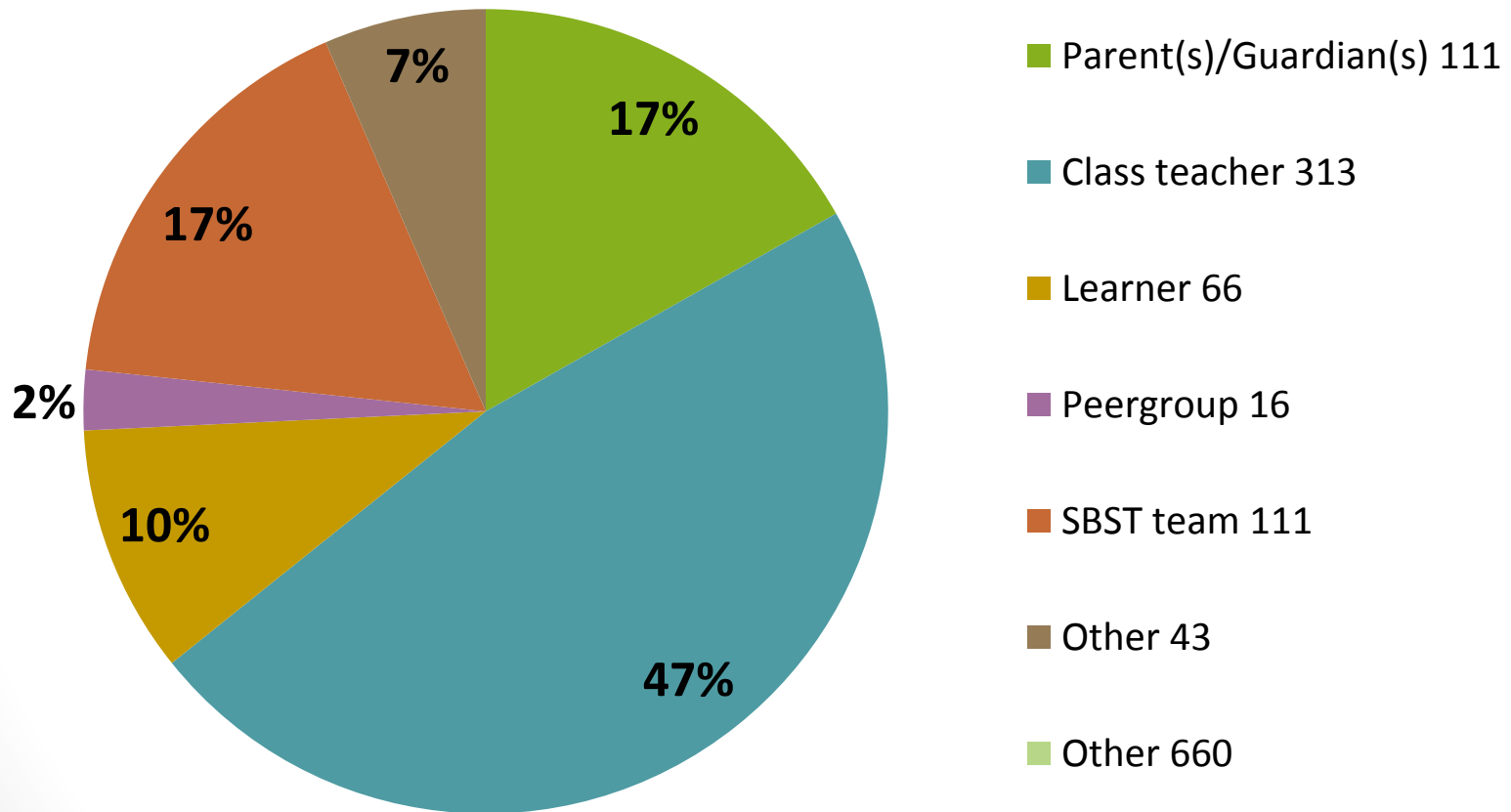
Class size



Grades repeated



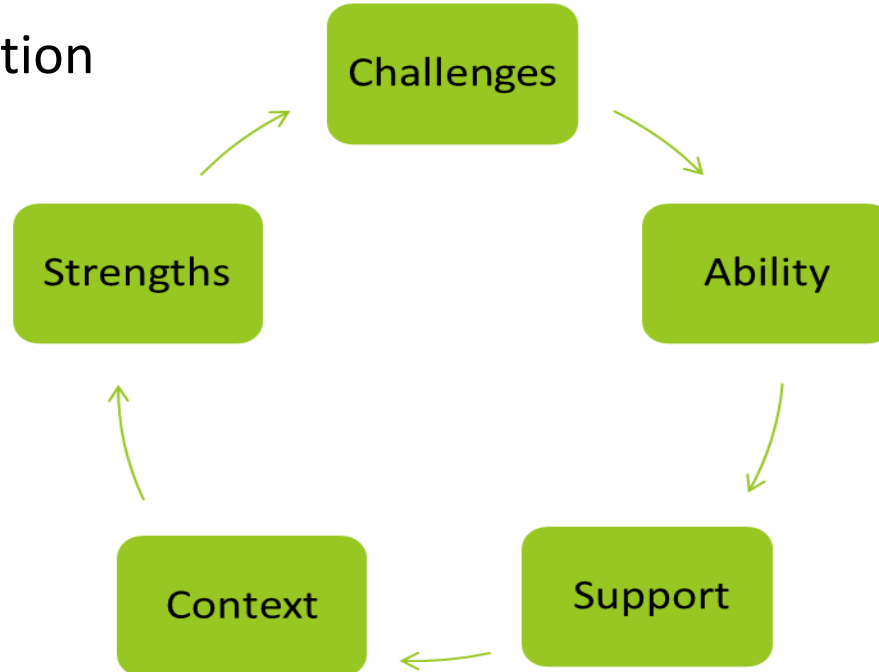
Concerned parties



**Reflecting from a
complexity perspective**

Reflecting on our process (1)

- Referral forms used as a tool to **initiate conversations** with teachers about the learners in their classes who concern them - with the intention to guide them towards a nuanced understanding of the interplay of the aspects below in each child's situation



Reflecting on our process (2)

In the process - gained a more integrated understanding of

- **the position of the individual learner**



within the collective of learners

- **recognised emerging patterns**



in the classrooms, school and across schools

that indicated the need for a more holistic thinking

Example of individual learner

Difficult home circumstances – trauma of losing parents at age 2 – live with aunt & older sister

Indicators of challenges

- Home situation / Trauma of losing parents
- Aggressive behaviour displayed – bit others
- Disorganised and impulsive
- Limited ability (teacher perception)
- Spelling
- Homework not done
- Work tempo
- Basic math's not mastered

Support

- Conversation with learner
- Contacted parents
- Life orientation discussion

Examples of patterns (1)

Scholastic / academic problems identified

- **Reading and writing** – ability to comprehend / handwriting / spelling
- **Maths** – number concept / basic operations
- **Ability to focus on schoolwork** – attention & concentration / understanding concepts
- **Planning and task completion** – follow instructions

Examples of patterns (1)

Socio –emotional problems identified

- Emotional instability
- Low self-esteem
- Trauma due to loss
- Challenging behaviour - no boundaries – force own will – manipulative
- Limited motivation – passive / playful not interested in work
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Anger & aggressive behaviour
- Smoking & drug abuse
- Problems with peer group

On-going conversations towards the dream

- Paradigm shift

- FROM: individualist, linear, casual

Thinking in metaphors of the machine - people are insentient and uncreative - written off when there is a default ...

- TO: organic, dynamic, humanistic and sentient approach
- using human-centered language, nourish, nurture ,
cultivate ..

Address all levels of intervention

- **IOM (1994) Typology of intervention based on timing of intervention and population served:**
 - Universal – preventative – primary level
Target all the members of a school community
 - Selective – preventative – secondary level
Target members and subgroups of members at risk of developing problems
 - Indicative – preventative – tertiary level
Target high-risk members who show signs of problems

SPECS Prilleltensky (2007)

The contextual field

Temporal

Reactive to **Proactive**

Ecological

Individual to **Collective**

The affirmation field

Participation

Detached – **Empowered**

Capabilities

Deficits – **Strenghts**

Training teachers

- To see the whole picture
- To understand paradox
- To understand integrated nature of "special needs" / barriers to learning / contextual challenges ...
- To apply SIAS as a conversational tool that steer the conversations & facilitate support
- To act within a support network
- To contribute to the conversation about prevention
- To collaborate with all role-players

A Never Ending Journey
Inclusive Education Is a Principle of Practice, Not an End Game
Kozleski, Yu, Satter, Francis and Harris

- These themes suggest that leadership for inclusive education requires attention to the structures and processes used to signal that **inclusive education is an undergirding principle of practice.**
- Equally important is the **development of relationships among students, teachers, and families that cement the structures.**
- Networking, planning and organising, **using time and space strategically**, and connecting schools with their communities were all aspects of capacity building.

Questions & answers
THANK YOU