

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis investigates a relatively under-researched area of behaviour support, namely the value and effectiveness of the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) model (Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2009; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012) within the context of South African classrooms. Within this study, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological framework (Bronfenbrenner 1977, 1979, 1986, 1992; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) is used as a conceptual tool to understand behavioural and behaviour support challenges, specifically within selected Limpopo Foundation Phase (FP) classrooms. Given that behavioural challenges contribute to learner exclusion in schools, the thesis also draws on inclusion imperatives (DoE 2001, 2005, 2014) that support learners' full and successful participation within schools. Following its shift from a focus on deficit and control towards a developmental approach of behaviour management, PBS was selected for its particular value within South Africa's history of corporal punishment, as well as the country's contextual factors of poverty and teacher (pre and in-service) under-preparedness in the area of behaviour support.

The research participants for this study comprised a purposive sample of Wits School of Education FP Limpopo in-service teachers, who each participated in the inclusion module taught in year four of their undergraduate degree. The study employed a mixed-methods research design and an analysis of various data sources, namely survey questionnaires, focus group interviews, module evaluations, open-ended questionnaires, as well as classroom observations in Limpopo schools and interviews with teachers of the classes that were observed. Overall, the research findings have provided evidence to support the effectiveness of the PBS model for Limpopo FP classrooms, and in doing so, have provided useful new information for the application of the model more broadly within the South African context. The PBS model was found to be valuable and effective in helping the Limpopo teachers better understand and better manage behavioural challenges in their classrooms. Findings show that respondents believe that their ability to manage behavioural challenges were inadequate before they were exposed to the PBS model. The respondents indicated that their initial limited linear view of learners and learner behaviour support had changed. As a result of an increased awareness of various ecosystemic factors related to behaviour and behaviour support, findings revealed that respondents developed a broader, more holistic understanding of learner behaviour and behaviour support management in the context of the classroom. The PBS

strategies that were employed in Limpopo classrooms were however not without their challenges.

The findings reveal opportunities for further research into PBS within South Africa at a school-wide level. Furthermore, longitudinal studies that incorporate PBS as part of teacher in-service and pre-service education will provide valuable data on the growing field of PBS within South Africa.

**KEY WORDS**

Inclusion, Bio-ecological, Teacher Education, Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), Limpopo Foundation Phase Teacher