

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE: GRADE HEADS' EXPERIENCES OF ENHANCING TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Runash RAMHURRY

Department of Languages, Cultural Studies and Applied Linguistics

Faculty of Humanities

University of Johannesburg, South Africa, 0000-0003-3657-9010, runashr@uj.ac.za

Abstract

Teacher job satisfaction is a critical factor influencing educational quality, teacher retention, and learner outcomes, particularly within special school contexts characterised by increased complexity and resource limitations. In South Africa, the implementation of inclusive education policies has intensified the leadership responsibilities of grade heads, yet limited research has examined the challenges they encounter in supporting teachers' job satisfaction. This study investigated the challenges faced by grade heads in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction in South African special schools. Guided by an interpretivist paradigm, the study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 purposively selected grade heads serving in formal middle-leadership positions in special schools. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability strategies, including member checking, an audit trail, and rich descriptions of the research context. The findings indicate that grade heads experience interconnected challenges associated with resource shortages, excessive administrative demands, inadequate leadership and special-needs training, emotional strain, and weak institutional support, which collectively constrain their ability to provide effective instructional and emotional support to teachers. The study concludes that improving teachers' job satisfaction requires coordinated systemic interventions that strengthen leadership capacity alongside institutional and policy support. Practically, the findings provide evidence to inform Department of Basic Education policies, leadership development programmes for grade heads, and school-level support strategies aimed at improving teacher well-being, leadership effectiveness, and inclusive education in special schools.

Keywords: educational leadership, grade heads, inclusive education, special schools, teacher job satisfaction, transformational leadership

Introduction

Research Background

Teacher job satisfaction has long been recognised as a fundamental determinant of teacher effectiveness, organisational commitment, retention, and learner achievement. Foundational studies by Locke (1976) conceptualised job satisfaction as a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's work experiences, while Herzberg's (1968) Two-Factor Theory distinguished between intrinsic motivators (e.g., recognition,

achievement, responsibility) and extrinsic hygiene factors (e.g., salary, working conditions, organisational policies) that influence employee satisfaction. Within educational settings, Dinham and Scott (1998) demonstrated that teacher job satisfaction is largely shaped by school leadership, collegial relationships, professional autonomy, and opportunities for professional growth. More recent research has reinforced these findings, showing that supportive leadership, positive school climate, and teacher well-being significantly predict job satisfaction and reduce burnout (Harrison et al., 2025). In special education contexts, however, teachers experience additional emotional and instructional demands associated with supporting learners with diverse disabilities, making job satisfaction particularly vulnerable to resource shortages, excessive workloads, and inadequate institutional support. These factors have been linked to higher levels of stress, burnout, and teacher attrition in special schools (Matjeni & De Jager, 2025; Elsayed et al., 2025).

The study should also situate grade heads within the broader scholarship on middle leadership. Research on educational leadership has increasingly recognised that school improvement is not driven solely by principals but also by middle leaders who translate strategic goals into classroom practice. Stone and Stone (2025) argue that middle leaders serve as critical connectors between senior management and classroom teachers by coordinating curriculum implementation, mentoring colleagues, and facilitating instructional improvement. Song and Hsieh (2026) further contend that distributed leadership has elevated the importance of middle leaders as instructional leaders who influence teacher motivation, collaboration, and professional learning. In South Africa, departmental heads and grade heads occupy this strategic middle-management position and are expected to balance instructional leadership, administrative responsibilities, and staff development. Studies by Mhlongo and Chaane (2025), Kubheka et al. (2025), and Lekalakala et al. (2026) demonstrate that middle leaders frequently experience role ambiguity, administrative overload, and limited preparation for leadership responsibilities. These competing demands often reduce their capacity to provide instructional and emotional support to teachers, thereby influencing teacher morale and job satisfaction.

The literature should further examine leadership within special education, where leadership responsibilities extend beyond conventional instructional management. Villaver et al. (2024) argued that leadership in special education requires specialised knowledge of inclusive pedagogy, collaboration with multidisciplinary teams, and advocacy for adequate resources to support learners with disabilities. Walker et al. (2025) similarly emphasised that special education leaders require competencies in policy implementation, family engagement, and staff development to ensure equitable educational opportunities. More recent scholarship suggests that effective leadership in special schools requires balancing instructional leadership with emotional support, resource management, and inclusive organisational cultures (Feng et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025). South African inclusive education policy, particularly Education White Paper 6, has expanded leadership responsibilities by requiring schools to accommodate diverse learner needs despite persistent shortages of specialist personnel, infrastructure, and teaching resources. Consequently, grade heads are increasingly expected to support teachers while simultaneously managing organisational constraints, creating tensions between policy expectations and practical realities.

Finally, the literature review should synthesise these three strands by demonstrating that teacher job satisfaction in special schools is shaped through the interaction of leadership practices, organisational support, and contextual constraints. Although transformational leadership has consistently been associated with higher teacher motivation and satisfaction (El Achi et al., 2025), its effectiveness is mediated by structural conditions such as workload, professional development opportunities, resource availability, and institutional support. This integrated perspective provides a stronger theoretical foundation for the study by positioning grade heads as middle leaders operating within complex organisational environments where leadership effectiveness depends not only on individual capability but also on systemic capacity to support inclusive education. This broader synthesis more clearly establishes the rationale for investigating the challenges grade heads face in enhancing teacher job satisfaction in South African special schools.

Research Problem Statement

Despite the recognised importance of grade heads in supporting teachers, evidence suggests that they face significant challenges that limit their ability to enhance teachers' job satisfaction, particularly in special school contexts (Mhlongo & Chaane, 2025; Oloba et al., 2025). As demonstrated in this study, issues such as resource constraints, administrative overload, limited training, emotional strain, and weak institutional support create barriers that undermine both leadership effectiveness and teacher well-being. These challenges are not only operational but also systemic, reflecting broader structural deficiencies within the education system. The problem is further exacerbated by the expectation that grade heads should perform transformational leadership roles without adequate support, training, or resources (Lekalakala et al., 2026). Consequently, teachers may experience reduced morale, increased burnout, and diminished job satisfaction, which can negatively affect teaching quality and learner outcomes. This highlights a critical disconnect between policy expectations and the realities faced by school leaders and teachers in special schools, necessitating further investigation.

Research Gap

While there is substantial literature on teacher job satisfaction and school leadership, there is limited research focusing specifically on the experiences of grade heads in special schools, particularly within the South African context. Most existing studies tend to focus on principals or senior school leaders, thereby overlooking the unique role and challenges of middle-level leaders such as grade heads (Alene et al., 2025; Fourie & Naidoo, 2022). Additionally, research on inclusive education often emphasises policy implementation and teacher experiences, with less attention given to how leadership dynamics influence teacher outcomes in specialised settings. Furthermore, although transformational leadership theory has been widely applied in educational research, there is a lack of studies examining its applicability and limitations in resource-constrained and high-demand environments such as special schools. This study addresses these gaps by providing context-specific insights into how systemic and organisational challenges shape the capacity of grade heads to enhance teachers' job satisfaction.

Research Rationale

This study is significant for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, it contributes to the refinement of transformational leadership theory by demonstrating how contextual factors, such as resource limitations and institutional constraints, mediate leadership practices in special school environments. It challenges the assumption that leadership effectiveness is solely dependent on individual capability, highlighting the importance of systemic support in enabling leaders to enact transformational practice. Practically, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, educational leaders, and stakeholders in the South African education system. By identifying the specific challenges faced by grade heads, the study informs the development of targeted interventions aimed at improving leadership effectiveness, teacher support, and job satisfaction. These insights are particularly relevant in the context of ongoing efforts to strengthen inclusive education and improve the quality of teaching and learning in special schools.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by grade heads in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction in special schools in South Africa.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Transformational Leadership Theory, originally developed by Burns (1978) and further expanded by Bass (1985). The theory posits that effective leaders inspire, motivate, and empower followers by fostering a shared vision, promoting professional growth, providing individualised consideration, and encouraging intellectual stimulation. Within educational settings, transformational leadership has consistently been associated with improved teacher motivation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and school effectiveness (Kaya, 2024; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). The theory provides an appropriate lens for examining the challenges experienced by grade heads in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction in South African special schools. As middle-level leaders, grade heads are expected to motivate teachers, provide instructional guidance, offer emotional support, and cultivate collaborative professional environments despite operating within resource-constrained contexts. The four dimensions of transformational leadership, idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, guided both the development of the interview schedule and the interpretation of the findings. The study further acknowledges that transformational leadership practices are shaped by contextual factors such as institutional support, resource availability, administrative demands, and policy implementation. Consequently, the theory enabled the researcher to examine not only the leadership practices of grade heads but also the structural constraints that influence their ability to promote teachers' job satisfaction.

Methodology

This study was underpinned by the interpretivist research paradigm, which is concerned with understanding participants' subjective experiences and the meanings they attach to social phenomena (Nickerson, 2022). The interpretivist stance was appropriate as the study sought to explore the lived experiences of grade heads in enhancing teachers' job

satisfaction within the complex context of special schools. By adopting this paradigm, the researcher was able to gain in-depth insights into how participants perceive and navigate challenges related to leadership, resources, and institutional support, recognising that reality is socially constructed and context-dependent. A qualitative research approach was employed to facilitate a rich, detailed exploration of the challenges faced by grade heads in special schools. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for studies that aim to understand complex social issues from participants' perspectives (Tenny et al., 2022). This approach enabled the researcher to capture nuanced experiences, emotions, and interpretations of grade heads, which would not have been possible through quantitative methods. The approach aligns with the interpretivist paradigm by prioritising depth of understanding over generalisation. The study adopted a case study research design, which allowed for an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon within its real-life context (Oranga & Matere, 2023). The case study design was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to explore the challenges faced by grade heads within specific special school settings in South Africa. This design facilitated a holistic understanding of how contextual factors such as resource limitations, policy implementation gaps, and leadership practices interact to influence teachers' job satisfaction.

The population of the study comprised grade heads working in special schools in South Africa. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic (Ahmed et al., 2025). A total of 10 grade heads were selected based on criteria such as holding a formal leadership position, having experience in special education settings, and being directly involved in supporting teachers. This sampling strategy ensured that participants could provide rich, relevant, and information-rich data aligned with the objectives of the study. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the relevant university Research Ethics Committee before data collection commenced. Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the relevant Provincial Department of Education and participating special schools. Participants received detailed information about the purpose of the study and voluntarily signed informed consent forms before participating. They were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms (e.g., Grade Head 1, Grade Head 2), and all interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences in depth while maintaining flexibility to probe emerging issues (Robinson, 2023). The use of open-ended questions enabled participants to freely express their perspectives on the challenges they face in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. Interviews were conducted in a manner that ensured confidentiality and comfort, thereby encouraging honest and detailed responses. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted at a time and venue convenient for the participants. This duration allowed participants sufficient opportunity to reflect on and elaborate their experiences while enabling the researcher to probe emerging issues relevant to the study. This method was appropriate for capturing the complexity of participants' experiences within their natural contexts. Data collection

continued until data saturation was achieved. Saturation was reached after interviewing ten grade heads, as no substantially new information, themes, or perspectives emerged during the final interviews. The recurrence of similar experiences across participants indicated that sufficient depth and breadth of information had been obtained to comprehensively address the research objectives. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accurate capture of participants' responses. The recordings were transcribed verbatim shortly after each interview to preserve meaning and contextual nuances. The researcher carefully compared each transcript with the original audio recordings to verify transcription accuracy before commencing data analysis. The verified transcripts subsequently formed the basis for coding and thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step analytical framework.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Thematic analysis was suitable for identifying patterns and recurring themes related to the challenges faced by grade heads. This method enabled the researcher to systematically interpret the data and present coherent themes such as resource constraints, role overload, and institutional support gaps. The trustworthiness of the study was ensured by applying Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking of interview summaries, and the use of verbatim quotations to accurately represent participants' perspectives. Transferability was promoted by providing rich descriptions of the research context, participants, and study procedures to enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. Dependability was achieved by maintaining a detailed audit trail documenting the research process, methodological decisions, and analytical procedures. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive note-taking, careful documentation of coding decisions, and ensuring that the findings were grounded in participants' accounts rather than the researcher's personal assumptions.

Findings and discussion

1. Resource Constraints and Inadequate Support Infrastructure

Participants conceptualised that grade heads in special schools face significant challenges related to limited resources and inadequate support infrastructure, which in turn constrain their ability to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. They highlighted shortages of specialised teaching materials, insufficient support personnel, and inadequate infrastructure as key barriers. These limitations not only affect instructional delivery but also contribute to teachers' frustration, low morale, and feelings of isolation. Grade Head 1 emphasised the lack of specialised teaching resources and assistive devices needed to support learners with diverse needs: *"One of the biggest challenges we face is the shortage of specialised teaching resources. Teachers are expected to support learners with diverse needs, but we simply do not have adequate assistive devices or materials to make teaching effective, and this frustrates them."* Similarly, Grade Head 3 pointed to the strain caused by limited human resources, particularly the shortage

of therapists and support staff, which increases teachers' workload and emotional pressure: *"We are constantly trying to do more with very limited resources. There are not enough therapists or support staff, so teachers feel overwhelmed, and as grade heads, it becomes difficult for us to maintain their motivation and job satisfaction."* Focusing on infrastructural challenges, Grade Head 5 highlighted how inadequate facilities and equipment hinder effective teaching and negatively affect teachers' morale: *"The lack of infrastructure, especially specialised classrooms and equipment, makes it hard for teachers to deliver quality lessons. They often feel unsupported, and this negatively affects their morale."* In addition, Grade Head 7 stated the inconsistency and unavailability of essential support services, which leaves teachers feeling isolated and unsupported in both professional and emotional dimensions: *"Teachers rely heavily on support services like psychologists and occupational therapists, but these services are either unavailable or inconsistent. As a result, teachers feel isolated, and we struggle to meet their professional and emotional needs."*

Although participants consistently identified resource shortages as a major challenge, their experiences differed regarding the extent to which these constraints could be mitigated through local leadership practices. While some grade heads perceived inadequate resources as an almost insurmountable barrier to supporting teachers, others suggested that collaborative problem-solving, resource sharing, and strong interpersonal relationships helped to partially offset these limitations. This variation indicates that although structural constraints are pervasive, individual school contexts and leadership approaches influence how such challenges are experienced and managed. These contrasting perspectives suggest that resource availability alone does not fully determine teachers' job satisfaction; rather, the ability of grade heads to mobilise existing resources and foster collaborative cultures may moderate the negative effects of material shortages.

The findings demonstrate that resource constraints and inadequate support infrastructure significantly undermine grade heads' capacity to enhance teachers' job satisfaction in special schools. The persistent shortage of specialised teaching materials, assistive technologies, and support personnel creates an environment in which teachers are compelled to operate under conditions of scarcity, thereby increasing their workload and emotional strain. This aligns with existing literature which indicates that inadequate resources in special and inclusive education contexts negatively affect teachers' efficacy, morale, and overall job satisfaction (Diseth, 2025; Matjeni & De Jager, 2025). In the South African context, studies have similarly shown that insufficient institutional support and limited access to specialised services hinder effective teaching and contribute to teacher dissatisfaction, particularly in under-resourced schools (Motitswe, 2025; Ramolobe et al., 2024). The findings of this study therefore confirm that structural deficiencies within the schooling system are not merely operational challenges but are deeply connected to teachers' psychological well-being and professional fulfilment.

From a Transformational Leadership perspective, these constraints limit grade heads' ability to enact key leadership practices such as individualised consideration and inspirational motivation, which are essential for fostering teacher development and job satisfaction (Manyaka & Simui, 2026). While transformational leaders are expected to create supportive and enabling environments, the data suggest that systemic resource

limitations restrict grade heads' agency in fulfilling this role. This extends previous research by illustrating that leadership effectiveness in special schools is not solely dependent on individual leadership capacity but is also mediated by contextual and structural factors (Feng et al., 2025). Consequently, even when grade heads demonstrate commitment to supporting teachers, the absence of adequate infrastructure and professional support systems constrains their efforts, leading to diminished teacher morale and satisfaction. This interpretation highlights the need for a systemic approach that combines leadership development with improved resource allocation to meaningfully enhance teachers' job satisfaction in special schools.

2. Role Overload and Administrative Burden

Participants expressed that grade heads experience significant role overload due to the multiple and competing responsibilities they are expected to fulfil. These include administrative duties, instructional leadership, and the provision of emotional support to teachers. Participants highlighted that the increasing administrative burden limits their capacity to engage meaningfully with teachers, thereby constraining their ability to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. Grade Head 2 described the challenge of balancing diverse responsibilities, noting that the workload restricts meaningful interaction with teachers: *"As grade heads, we are expected to handle administrative tasks, manage curriculum delivery, and still support teachers emotionally. The workload is overwhelming, and it leaves very little time to properly engage with teachers on issues affecting their job satisfaction."* Similarly, Grade Head 4 emphasised the time-consuming nature of administrative tasks, which reduces opportunities for mentorship and professional support: *"Most of my time is spent on paperwork and reporting requirements. By the time I finish administrative duties, I am too exhausted to provide the kind of mentorship and support that teachers actually need."* Highlighting the multiplicity of roles, Grade Head 6 pointed out that the expectation to function in several capacities simultaneously undermines effective teacher support: *"We wear too many hats: leader, counsellor, mediator, and administrator. This makes it difficult to focus on supporting teachers in a meaningful way, which affects their morale and overall job satisfaction."* In addition, Grade Head 8 stated how administrative demands often take precedence over teacher support, resulting in delayed or insufficient guidance: *"There are constant meetings, reports, and deadlines that take priority over teacher support. Even when teachers need guidance, I often have to postpone because of administrative pressures."*

Although all participants acknowledged the increasing administrative workload, they differed in how they interpreted its impact on their leadership responsibilities. Some grade heads viewed administrative demands as competing directly with instructional leadership and teacher support, whereas others regarded administrative compliance as an unavoidable aspect of educational leadership that required improved time management rather than structural change alone. These contrasting viewpoints illustrate that role overload is experienced differently depending on organisational expectations, leadership experience, and the level of institutional support available. Consequently, the findings suggest that administrative burden is not merely a quantitative issue of workload but also a qualitative issue concerning how leaders prioritise competing responsibilities.

Participants' opinions indicate that role overload and administrative burden significantly constrain grade heads' ability to effectively enhance teachers' job satisfaction in special schools. The multiplicity of responsibilities, ranging from administrative compliance to instructional leadership and emotional support, creates competing demands that limit sustained engagement with teachers. This supports existing research which shows that excessive administrative workloads reduce school leaders' capacity to prioritise instructional leadership and teacher development, thereby negatively affecting teacher morale and job satisfaction (Creagh et al., 2025; Zeng et al., 2025). In the South African context, similar challenges have been identified, where school leaders are often overwhelmed by bureaucratic requirements, limiting their ability to provide meaningful professional support to teachers (Mthembu & Bhengu, 2025). The current findings therefore confirm that administrative intensification not only affects leadership effectiveness but also indirectly undermines teachers' workplace experiences by restricting access to mentorship and support.

From a Transformational Leadership perspective, the dominance of administrative tasks inhibits grade heads from practising key leadership behaviours such as individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, and continuous support, which are essential for fostering teacher motivation and job satisfaction (Kaya, 2024). The data extend existing literature by highlighting how contextual pressures, particularly administrative demands, mediate the enactment of transformational leadership practices in special school settings (Sweet, 2026). Thus, even when grade heads are willing to support teachers, the structural burden of administrative responsibilities limits their visibility, accessibility, and relational engagement with staff. This suggests that enhancing teachers' job satisfaction requires not only leadership capacity-building but also systemic efforts to reduce administrative overload, thereby enabling grade heads to focus more effectively on their core instructional and supportive roles.

3. Limited Training in Special Needs and Leadership

Participants opined that limited formal training in both special needs education and leadership presents a significant challenge for grade heads in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. They indicated that their appointments are often based on teaching experience rather than specialised training, which creates gaps in their ability to effectively support teachers and complex learner needs and provide strong instructional leadership. Grade Head 1 highlighted the absence of formal preparation in both leadership and special needs education, which affects their ability to guide teachers: *"I was appointed as a grade head based on my teaching experience, but I never received formal training in leadership or special needs education. This makes it difficult to guide teachers who are dealing with complex learner needs."* Similarly, Grade Head 4 emphasised the challenge of supporting teachers without adequate training in handling diverse learning and behavioural needs: *"We are expected to support teachers in handling diverse learning and behavioural challenges, yet many of us have not been adequately trained in special education. This limits the kind of support we can provide."* Focusing on leadership development, Grade Head 7 pointed to a lack of structured leadership training, which undermines their ability to motivate and support teachers effectively: *"There is a clear gap in leadership development for grade heads. We are*

managing teams and expected to motivate teachers, but without proper training, it becomes challenging to influence their job satisfaction positively.” In addition, Grade Head 9 noted reliance on personal experience rather than formal training, which leaves them feeling inadequately equipped to address specialised challenges: *“Most of the skills I use are based on personal experience rather than formal training. When teachers come with specialised challenges, I sometimes feel ill-equipped to offer effective solutions.”*

While most participants emphasised the absence of formal leadership preparation, some indicated that years of practical experience had enabled them to develop adaptive strategies for supporting teachers despite limited formal training. Others, however, maintained that experiential learning could not adequately substitute structured professional development, particularly when addressing specialised learner needs and complex staff challenges. These differing perspectives reveal that experience may strengthen leadership confidence but does not necessarily equip grade heads with the specialised competencies required in special school contexts. The findings therefore suggest that professional expertise emerges through an interaction between experiential learning and formal leadership development rather than through either process in isolation.

Participants’ responses indicate that limited training in both special needs education and leadership significantly constrains grade heads’ ability to enhance teachers’ job satisfaction in special schools. The reliance on prior teaching experience as the primary criterion for appointment, without corresponding professional preparation, creates a misalignment between role expectations and leadership capacity. This gap reduces grade heads’ effectiveness in supporting teachers and complex learner needs and managing diverse classroom challenges. These findings are consistent with existing studies which indicate that insufficient training in inclusive and special education contexts undermines teachers’ and school leaders’ confidence, efficacy, and ability to provide meaningful support (Mokhampanyane, 2024; Sepadi, 2025). Thus, the current study confirms that professional preparedness is a critical determinant of both leadership effectiveness and teacher well-being.

From a Transformational Leadership perspective, the absence of formal leadership training limits grade heads’ ability to enact key practices such as individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, all of which are central to enhancing teachers’ job satisfaction (Kaya, 2024). The findings extend previous literature by demonstrating that leadership practices are not only influenced by personal attributes but are also contingent on access to structured training and development opportunities (Liden et al., 2025). Without adequate preparation, grade heads are less equipped to provide targeted support, foster professional growth, and respond effectively to teachers’ needs in complex educational settings. This suggests that strengthening leadership development programmes, particularly those focused on special needs education, is essential for empowering grade heads to fulfil their roles more effectively and to create supportive environments that promote teachers’ job satisfaction.

4. Emotional Demands and Teacher Burnout

Participants indicate that the emotional demands associated with teaching in special schools significantly contribute to teacher burnout, thereby posing a challenge for grade heads in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. They highlighted that teachers frequently experience emotional exhaustion due to the intensity of learner needs, while grade heads are expected to provide ongoing emotional support despite lacking formal counselling training. This dual burden places considerable strain on both teachers and grade heads. Grade Head 2 described the emotional toll on teachers and the added pressure on grade heads who are required to provide support without adequate training: *"Teachers in our school are emotionally drained because they deal with learners who require constant attention and care. As grade heads, we try to support them, but we are not trained counsellors, and it becomes overwhelming for us as well."* Similarly, Grade Head 4 pointed to the prevalence of burnout among teachers and the difficulty of addressing their emotional needs without appropriate psychological expertise: *"Many teachers experience burnout due to the emotional demands of the job. They often come to us for support, but without proper psychological training, it is difficult to fully address their needs."* Highlighting the dual responsibility, Grade Head 6 noted the challenge of supporting others while managing personal stress: *"We are expected to play a dual role—supporting teachers emotionally while also managing our own stress. Over time, this takes a toll on both teachers and grade heads."* In addition, Grade Head 8 emphasised the intensity of emotional pressure within special school contexts and the lack of adequate support systems to sustain teacher morale: *"The emotional pressure in special schools is very high. Teachers become frustrated and exhausted, and as grade heads, we struggle to keep their morale up without adequate support systems in place."*

Participants differed in the extent to which they believed emotional demands could be effectively managed within existing school structures. Some regarded emotional exhaustion as an inevitable consequence of working in special school environments, whereas others believed that stronger collegial relationships, peer support, and shared leadership practices helped to reduce emotional strain despite the absence of formal counselling services. These contrasting accounts demonstrate that burnout is influenced not only by individual resilience but also by the quality of organisational support and workplace relationships. This finding suggests that emotional well-being should be understood as a collective organisational responsibility rather than solely an individual coping challenge.

The findings reveal that the emotional demands inherent in special school contexts significantly contribute to teacher burnout, thereby constraining grade heads' efforts to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. The intensity of supporting learners with complex and diverse needs places sustained psychological pressure on teachers, often resulting in emotional exhaustion and reduced professional fulfilment. At the same time, grade heads are expected to provide continuous emotional support despite lacking formal training in counselling or psychological care, creating a dual burden that affects their own well-being and leadership effectiveness. These findings are consistent with existing literature which identifies emotional labour and burnout as prevalent challenges in special and inclusive education settings, often leading to decreased job satisfaction and increased attrition (Elsayed et al., 2025; Matjeni & De Jager, 2025). The current findings therefore confirm

that emotional strain is both an individual and systemic issue that directly impacts teachers' workplace experiences.

From a Transformational Leadership perspective, the capacity of grade heads to provide individualised consideration and emotional support is central to fostering teacher well-being and job satisfaction. However, the data suggest that the absence of formal psychological training and institutional support limits their ability to effectively enact these leadership practices (Manyaka & Simui, 2026). This extends previous research by illustrating that the emotional dimension of leadership in special schools is not sufficiently supported by existing professional development frameworks, thereby constraining the practical application of transformational leadership (Liu et al., 2025). Thus, while grade heads may demonstrate commitment to supporting teachers, their efforts are undermined by emotional fatigue and insufficient systemic support. This highlighted the need for targeted interventions, including access to counselling services and emotional resilience training, to strengthen both teacher and leader well-being and ultimately enhance job satisfaction in special school contexts.

5. Weak Institutional Support and Policy Implementation Gaps

Participants posited that weak institutional support and gaps in policy implementation present significant challenges for grade heads in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction in special schools. They highlighted a disconnect between inclusive education policies and their practical application at the school level. This includes unclear guidelines, limited departmental support, and insufficient professional development opportunities, all of which constrain grade heads' capacity to effectively support teachers. Grade Head 1 reflected on the disparity between policy expectations and the realities within schools, noting limited institutional support despite the existence of Education White Paper 6: *"Although policies like Education White Paper 6 promote inclusive education, the support we receive at the school level is limited. There is a gap between what is expected and what is practically possible."* Similarly, Grade Head 3 highlighted the lack of clear guidance and consistent training from the department, which complicates effective policy implementation: *"We are expected to implement inclusive education policies, but there are no clear guidelines or consistent training from the department. This makes it difficult for us to effectively support teachers."* Focusing on professional development, Grade Head 6 emphasised the scarcity of training opportunities, which undermines teachers' motivation and job satisfaction: *"Institutional support is lacking, especially in terms of professional development. Teachers need continuous training, but these opportunities are scarce, which affects their motivation and job satisfaction."* In addition, Grade Head 9 pointed to a broader disconnect between policy and practice, where responsibilities are assigned without adequate resources or support: *"There is a disconnect between policy and practice. We are given responsibilities without adequate resources or support from the department, and this limits our ability to enhance teachers' job satisfaction."*

Although participants generally criticised weak institutional support, they expressed different views regarding the implementation of inclusive education policies. Some participants argued that policy shortcomings primarily reflected inadequate departmental support and insufficient resources, whereas others believed that greater school-level

initiative and stronger collaboration among school leaders could improve implementation despite existing policy limitations. These contrasting perspectives indicate that implementation challenges arise from the interaction between systemic constraints and local leadership capacity. Consequently, the findings extend beyond identifying policy-practice gaps by illustrating that successful implementation depends on both institutional commitment and the agency of school leaders operating within complex educational environments.

The findings indicate that weak institutional support and gaps in policy implementation significantly constrain grade heads' efforts to enhance teachers' job satisfaction in special schools. Although inclusive education policies in South Africa provide a progressive framework, their inconsistent enactment at the school level creates a disconnect between policy intent and practical realities. The lack of clear operational guidelines, limited departmental support, and insufficient access to ongoing professional development undermine both leadership practices and teachers' capacity to effectively respond to diverse learner needs. These findings are consistent with prior research which highlights that policy implementation in inclusive education is often hindered by inadequate resources, insufficient training, and weak systemic support, thereby negatively affecting teacher morale and job satisfaction (Mokhampanyane, 2024; Motitswe, 2025). Furthermore, studies have shown that when policy expectations are not matched with institutional capacity, school leaders and teachers experience frustration, role ambiguity, and reduced professional efficacy (Kubheka et al., 2025). The present study therefore confirms that structural and systemic limitations play a critical role in shaping teachers' workplace experiences.

From a Transformational Leadership perspective, effective leadership relies on the ability to align vision with practice, provide intellectual stimulation, and support continuous professional growth. However, the findings suggest that grade heads' capacity to enact these leadership dimensions is constrained by systemic inadequacies beyond their control. This extends existing literature by demonstrating that even when school leaders are committed to fostering supportive and motivating environments, weak institutional backing and fragmented policy implementation limit their influence on teacher outcomes (Achi et al., 2025; Ximenes, 2026). Therefore, the challenge is not solely one of leadership capability but also of systemic coherence and support. Addressing these gaps requires stronger alignment between policy directives and school-level realities, as well as sustained investment in professional development and institutional support structures to enable grade heads to effectively enhance teachers' job satisfaction in special schools.

Contribution of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of leadership and teacher job satisfaction within the context of special schools in South Africa by providing a nuanced synthesis of interconnected challenges faced by grade heads. The findings collectively reveal that resource constraints, role overload, limited training, emotional demands, and weak institutional support are not isolated issues but are deeply interrelated and mutually reinforcing. For instance, inadequate resources intensify teachers' emotional strain, while administrative burdens reduce grade heads' capacity to

provide support, and insufficient training further weakens their ability to respond effectively to these challenges. These intersecting dynamics highlight that teacher job satisfaction in special schools is shaped by a complex interplay of structural, organisational, and individual factors rather than a single determinant. In this regard, the study extends existing literature by offering an integrated perspective that captures how multiple systemic constraints converge to influence both leadership practices and teacher well-being in specialised educational settings.

From a theoretical perspective, the study provides contextual insights into the application of Transformational Leadership theory within resource-constrained and high-demand environments such as special schools by demonstrating its contextual limitations when applied in these settings. While the theory emphasises practices such as individualised consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation, the findings suggest that these leadership behaviours are significantly mediated by structural and institutional conditions. Rather than refining Transformational Leadership Theory, the findings illustrate how its application is shaped by contextual realities, highlighting the importance of considering resource availability, institutional support, and policy implementation when interpreting leadership practices in under-resourced educational settings. This implies that the application of Transformational Leadership should be understood in relation to the contextual conditions within which leaders operate, particularly in special schools characterised by limited resources and high organisational demands. The study therefore advances the argument that leadership effectiveness is not solely a function of individual capability but is co-constructed through systemic support, resource availability, and policy coherence. Additionally, the findings reveal tensions and overlaps between themes; for example, the expectation for emotional support (emotional demands) conflicts with limited time (role overload) and inadequate preparation (limited training), thereby creating competing pressures that undermine leadership effectiveness.

In terms of practical and policy contributions, the study highlighted the need for a systemic and multi-level approach to improving teachers' job satisfaction in special schools. At the policy level, it highlights the importance of aligning inclusive education policies with adequate resource allocation, clear implementation guidelines, and sustained professional development opportunities. At the institutional level, the findings call for reducing administrative burdens on grade heads to enable greater focus on instructional leadership and teacher support. At the practice level, the study emphasises the need for targeted leadership training programmes that integrate both special needs education and emotional support competencies. Furthermore, the study contributes methodologically by foregrounding the voices of grade heads, thereby providing contextually grounded insights that are often underrepresented in leadership research. The study advances scholarly understanding by demonstrating that enhancing teachers' job satisfaction in special schools requires not only effective leadership practices but also systemic transformation that addresses the broader contextual realities within which such leadership is enacted.

Recommendations

1. Strengthening Resource Provision and Support Infrastructure

The Department of Basic Education (DBE), in collaboration with provincial education departments and school governing bodies, should prioritise the equitable provision of resources to special schools. This can be achieved through ring-fenced funding allocations specifically dedicated to assistive technologies, specialised teaching materials, and the recruitment of multidisciplinary support personnel such as psychologists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists. Additionally, partnerships with the Department of Health and relevant non-governmental organisations can be established to supplement existing support services. Implementation should involve regular resource audits, needs assessments, and transparent monitoring systems to ensure accountability and efficiency. Strengthening resource provision is significant as it directly enhances teachers' capacity to deliver effective instruction, reduces work-related stress, and creates a more supportive teaching environment, thereby improving teachers' job satisfaction and learner outcomes.

2. Reducing Administrative Burden on Grade Heads

The DBE and school management teams should implement strategies to minimise the administrative workload placed on grade heads by streamlining reporting processes and introducing digital administrative systems. This may include adopting school management software to automate routine tasks such as attendance tracking, reporting, and data management. Furthermore, schools should consider appointing administrative assistants or redistributing administrative responsibilities among staff to allow grade heads to focus on instructional leadership. District offices can support this initiative by reviewing and simplifying compliance requirements that contribute to excessive paperwork. The significance of this recommendation lies in enabling grade heads to dedicate more time to mentoring, supporting, and engaging with teachers, which is essential for fostering a positive work environment and enhancing teachers' job satisfaction.

3. Enhancing Leadership and Special Needs Training

The DBE, in partnership with higher education institutions and teacher training colleges, should design and implement continuous professional development programmes tailored specifically for grade heads in special schools. These programmes should integrate transformational leadership principles with specialised training in inclusive and special needs education. Delivery modes may include workshops, short courses, online learning platforms, and mentorship programmes. Participation in such training should be incentivised and, where possible, made a requirement for leadership positions in special schools. Regular evaluation of these programmes should be conducted to ensure relevance and effectiveness. This recommendation is significant as it equips grade heads with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide effective instructional and emotional support to teachers, thereby enhancing their confidence, leadership effectiveness, and ability to improve teachers' job satisfaction.

4. Providing Psychosocial Support and Well-being Programmes

Provincial education departments, in collaboration with schools and external mental health professionals, should establish structured psychosocial support systems for both teachers and grade heads. This can include access to professional counselling services, employee wellness programmes, stress management workshops, and peer support groups within schools. Schools can designate well-being coordinators or collaborate with district-based support teams to facilitate these initiatives. Additionally, awareness campaigns should be conducted to reduce stigma associated with seeking psychological support. The implementation of regular well-being check-ins and support sessions can further strengthen this initiative. The significance of this recommendation lies in addressing emotional exhaustion and burnout, which are prevalent in special school contexts, thereby promoting emotional resilience, improving morale, and enhancing overall job satisfaction among teachers.

5. Strengthening Policy Implementation and Institutional Support

The DBE and district-level education authorities should strengthen the implementation of inclusive education policies by providing clear, practical guidelines and consistent support to schools. This can be achieved through regular training workshops, on-site support visits, and the development of user-friendly policy implementation frameworks tailored to special school contexts. District officials should play an active role in mentoring grade heads and monitoring policy implementation to ensure alignment between policy expectations and school-level practices. Additionally, feedback mechanisms should be established to allow schools to communicate challenges and receive timely support. The significance of this recommendation lies in bridging the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that grade heads are adequately supported in their roles, and creating an enabling environment that promotes teachers' job satisfaction and effective teaching practices.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by grade heads in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction in South African special schools, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a qualitative case study design involving only ten purposively selected grade heads, which provided rich, context-specific insights but limits the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts or school types. Second, the study focused exclusively on the perspectives of grade heads and did not include the voices of teachers, principals, district officials, or other stakeholders who may provide complementary understandings of the factors influencing teacher job satisfaction. Third, the findings were derived from participants' self-reported experiences, which may have been influenced by personal perceptions and contextual circumstances. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within the specific institutional and policy contexts of the participating special schools rather than generalised across all South African schools.

Future research should adopt mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs to examine how leadership practices influence teacher job satisfaction over time and across

diverse educational settings. Comparative studies involving mainstream, inclusive, and special schools would provide a broader understanding of contextual differences in leadership challenges. In addition, future studies should incorporate the perspectives of teachers, principals, district officials, and policymakers to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the organisational and systemic factors influencing leadership effectiveness and teacher well-being. Further research could also evaluate the effectiveness of leadership development programmes, psychosocial support initiatives, and policy interventions aimed at strengthening grade heads' capacity to foster teacher job satisfaction in resource-constrained educational environments.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the challenges faced by grade heads in enhancing teachers' job satisfaction in special schools in South Africa. The findings reveal that grade heads operate within complex and constrained environments characterised by resource limitations, administrative overload, inadequate training, emotional strain, and weak institutional support. These interconnected challenges not only hinder grade heads' ability to effectively perform their leadership roles but also significantly impact teachers' morale, well-being, and job satisfaction. Drawing on Transformational Leadership theory, the study highlights that while grade heads are expected to inspire, support, and develop teachers, their capacity to enact these leadership practices is often constrained by systemic and structural factors beyond their control. This highlights the importance of viewing leadership effectiveness within the broader organisational and policy context rather than as an individual responsibility. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational leadership in special school contexts by demonstrating that improving teachers' job satisfaction requires a holistic and systemic approach. It is not sufficient to focus solely on leadership development without addressing the structural and institutional barriers that shape leadership practice. Therefore, a coordinated effort involving policymakers, educational leaders, and support stakeholders is essential to create enabling environments where both grade heads and teachers can thrive. There is an urgent call to action for the Department of Basic Education and relevant stakeholders to prioritise resource allocation, leadership development, and institutional support for special schools. Without deliberate and sustained intervention, the challenges identified in this study will continue to undermine the quality of education and the well-being of teachers. Addressing these issues is not only critical for improving teachers' job satisfaction but also for ensuring inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for all learners in South Africa.

References

- Achi, S., Jabbour Al Maalouf, N., Barakat, H., & Mawad, J. L. (2025). The impact of transformational leadership and work environment on teachers' performance in crisis-affected educational settings. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(7), 1-21.
- Ahmad, A. N., Hamid, H., & Zahrin, S. N. A. (2025). Reflective practice in teaching and learning: An analysis from experts' perspectives. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(10), 87-106.

- Alene, A. A., Tsegaye, M. A., & Wolle, G. S. (2025). Secondary school principals' adaptive leadership practices amid the quality education crisis in Amhara regional state, Ethiopia. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, 1-11.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Creagh, S., Thompson, G., Mockler, N., Stacey, M., & Hogan, A. (2025). Workload, work intensification and time poverty for teachers and school leaders: A systematic research synthesis. *Educational Review*, 77(2), 661-680.
- Dinham, S., & Scott, C. (1998). A three-domain model of teacher and school executive career satisfaction. *Journal of educational administration*, 36(4), 362-378.
- Diseth, Å. (2025). Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, levels of self-efficacy and beliefs about a strength-based approach to education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-19.
- El Achi, S., Al Maalouf, N. J., Barakat, H., & Mawad, J. L. (2025). The impact of transformational leadership and work environment on teachers' performance in crisis-affected educational settings. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(7), 1-21.
- Elsayed, H. A. E., Almoabadi, G., & Albeshri, M. (2025). Sociodemographic correlates, job satisfaction, and burnout among special education teachers. *Acta Psychologica*, 258, 1-18.
- Feng, Y., Zhou, D., & Wei, Y. (2025). The Impact of School Leadership on Inclusive Education Literacy: Examining the Sequential Mediation of Job Stress and Teacher Agency. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(11), 1-15.
- Fourie, L., & Naidoo, P. (2022). Middle leaders and managers' perspectives of distributive leadership during COVID-19. *Perspectives in Education*, 40(4), 276-295.
- Harrison, M. G., Wang, Y., Cheng, A. S., Tam, C. K. Y., Pan, Y. L., & King, R. B. (2025). School climate and teacher wellbeing: The role of basic psychological need satisfaction in student-and school-related domains. *Teaching and teacher education*, 153, 1-11.
- Herzberg, F. (1968). *One more time: How do you motivate employees* (Vol. 65). Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review.
- Kaya, A. (2024). The association between transformational leadership and teachers' creativity: professional resilience and job satisfaction as mediators. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1514621.
- Kubheka, P. N., Naidoo, P., & Oloba, P. B. (2025). Instructional leadership experiences of departmental heads in five public primary schools in Gauteng province, South Africa. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research*, 7(2), 1-18.
- Lekalakala, M. T., Modise, M. R., & Maloka, P. (2026). Promoting professional identities and well-being of foundation phase middle leaders in Gauteng North District, South Africa. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, (7), 70 – 81.
- Liden, R. C., Wang, X., & Wang, Y. (2025). The evolution of leadership: Past insights, present trends, and future directions. *Journal of Business Research*, 186, 1-18.
- Liu, L., Li, K., Yue, L., & Arshad, M. Z. (2025). Burnout and leadership in special education: A sustainable approach through the lens of SDG 3 and SDG 4. *Acta Psychologica*, 259, 1-13.
- Locke, J. (1976). *The Correspondence of John Locke* (Vol. 7). Oxford University Press.

- Manyaka, M. M., & Simui, F. (2026). Exploring hybrid leadership's influence on school-based support teams in no-fee primary schools. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 16(1), 1-10.
- Matjeni, M., & De Jager, S. (2025). Cultivating special education teacher well-being: Nurturing connection in professional learning communities. *African Journal of Disability*, 14, 1-6.
- Mhlongo, A. R., & Chaane, T. M. (2025). Challenges experienced by Gauteng Foundation Phase departmental heads in managing teaching and learning. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 15(1), 1-11.
- Mokhampanyane, M. (2024). Teachers' capabilities in implementing inclusive education: A South African perspective. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 9(3), 11-25.
- Motitswe, J. M. (2025). Teachers' perceptions on including learners with barriers to learning in South African inclusive education system. *African Journal of Disability*, 14, 1-15.
- Mthembu, P. E., & Bhengu, T. T. (2025). District leadership strategies and its challenges in supporting teaching and learning: perspectives of two districts in South Africa. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, 1-11.
- Nickerson, C. (2022). Interpretivism paradigm & research philosophy. *Simply Sociology*, 5(2), 50-67.
- Oloba, P. B., Motlhabane, M. G., & Tsedura, B. R. (2025). Departmental heads' perceptions of novice teachers' positive and negative characteristics. *International Journal of Educational Management and Development Studies*, 6(3), 269-303.
- Oranga, J., & Matere, A. (2023). Qualitative research: essence, types and advantages. *Open Access Library Journal*, 10(12), 1-9.
- Ramolobe, K. S., Malatji, M., & Mavuso, S. (2024). An evaluation of venue capacity constraints on teaching and learning in higher education. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 9, 1-7.
- Ricks, J. K. (2025). *Encouraging Job Satisfaction and Teacher Well-Being Through Leadership* (Master's Dissertation, Abilene Christian University).
- Robinson, O. C. (2023). Probing in qualitative research interviews: Theory and practice. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 20(3), 382-397.
- Sepadi, M. (2025). Inclusive education in resource-constrained settings: exploring mainstream teachers' curriculum knowledge and practices for autistic learners in South Africa. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, 1-10.
- Song, Y., & Hsieh, C. C. (2026). Distributed leadership, teacher autonomy, and well-being: A multilevel analysis of novice teachers' teaching practice quality in Taiwan using TALIS 2018 data. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 1-22.
- Stone, P., & Stone, R. (2025). Professional development leadership: the importance of middle leaders. *Professional development in education*, 51(7), 1346-1360.
- Sweet, J. R. (2026). Interpreting Public School Administrators' Experience of the Transformational Leadership Style During an Educator Shortage: A Hermeneutical Phenomenological Study (Doctoral thesis, Liberty University).
- Tenny, S., Brannan, J. M., Brannan, G. D., & Sharts-Hopko, N. C. (2022). *Qualitative study*. StatPearls-NCBI Bookshelf. National Center for Biotechnology Information.

- Vieira, L., Rohmer, O., Jury, M., Desombre, C., Delaval, M., Doignon-Camus, N., ... & Popa-Roch, M. (2024). Attitudes and self-efficacy as buffers against burnout in inclusive settings: Impact of a training programme in pre-service teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 144, 1-9.
- Villaver Jr, M., Mugadza, J., Kilag, O. K., Uy, F., Jordan, R., & Samutya, M. (2024). Leadership in special education: Promoting inclusion and equity. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(4), 1-7.
- Walker, T. M., McKelvey, S., Johnson, M. M., Belle, M. R., & Clemons, K. M. (2025). Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Special Education Leadership Through Targeted Professional Development. *Journal of Information Technologies and Lifelong Learning (JITLL)*, (8), 1, 290-298.
- Wilson Heenan, I., De Paor, D., Lafferty, N., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2023). The impact of transformational school leadership on school staff and school culture in primary schools—A systematic review of international literature. *Societies*, 13(6), 1-27.
- Ximenes, S. M. (2026). Community-Based Educational Leadership for Improving Teaching and Learning Quality in Timor-Leste Primary Schools: A Systematic Review. *ASEAN Journal of Community Service and Education*, 5(2), 85-98.
- Zeng, L., Yang, L., Xiong, T., & Yang, T. (2025). Teachers as administrators: Teachers'(dis) engagement in administrative work in Chinese primary and secondary schools. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 118, 1-9.