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From I see you to I belong: A conceptual framework for reintegration of learners with dyslexia into mainstream classrooms

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Background: Learners with dyslexia transitioning from remedial to mainstream schools face academic, social and emotional challenges. Inclusive education policies ensure access, yet practical guidance for teachers and support teams is limited.

Aim: The aim of this study was to develop a conceptual framework to guide the reintegration of learners with dyslexia from remedial schools into mainstream classrooms. The framework is grounded in liminality theory and sociocultural learning theory and emphasises learner-centred support and structured scaffolding.

Setting: The framework was developed in Johannesburg, involving a learner with dyslexia, parents, teachers and school-based and district-based support personnel.

Methods: Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. Thematic analysis informed the development of the framework.

Results: Reintegration practices were found to inadequately address learners' transitional experiences and socially mediated learning needs. The framework provides structured guidance for teachers, families and support teams to facilitate gradual adaptation and meaningful participation.

Conclusion: By integrating emotional, academic and relational support, the framework ensures learners are supported holistically throughout reintegration.

Contribution: This study provides a contextually grounded framework that enhances understanding of reintegration processes and strengthens inclusive practice for learners with dyslexia.

Keywords: conceptual framework; dyslexia; reintegration; liminality; sociocultural theory; inclusive education.

Introduction

Educational transitions are pivotal moments in the academic journey of learners. These transitions mark periods of change that can significantly influence learning outcomes, engagement and personal development (Bradfield 2024; Tarjiah et al. 2023). For most learners, moving between schools or classrooms requires adaptation to new routines, expectations and social environments. However, for learners with dyslexia, transitions are particularly challenging. They must navigate not only new academic content but also social dynamics and emotional stressors associated with a new learning environment (O'Brien & Yeatman 2021; Shaywitz 2020).

Learners with dyslexia often face difficulties in reading, writing and processing information efficiently (International Dyslexia Association 2020; Shaywitz 2020). These challenges can make mainstream classrooms overwhelming, especially when support structures are insufficient or inconsistent (Abu Omar et al. 2024; O'Brien 2020). In addition to academic struggles, learners may experience anxiety, reduced confidence, and feelings of social exclusion. These experiences can hinder their participation, limit engagement with peers, and negatively affect overall self-efficacy (Shao & Kang 2022).

Although inclusive education policies, such as South Africa's Education White Paper 6, advocate for the equitable participation of all learners in mainstream classrooms, practical guidance for teachers, families and support personnel is limited (Department of Basic Education [DBE] 2001; Tarjiah et al. 2023). Teachers may be aware of the policy goals but often lack structured strategies

to facilitate smooth transitions. Support teams may not consistently collaborate across remedial and mainstream contexts. As a result, learners are frequently left to navigate the complexities of reintegration on their own.

Transitions can be conceptualised as liminal spaces, in which learners experience uncertainty, negotiate new identities, and adjust to unfamiliar social and academic expectations (Hassan 2023; Turner 1969). Liminality highlights the emotional and psychological challenges learners face during periods of change. Simultaneously, sociocultural theory emphasises that learning is inherently social. The interactions learners have with teachers, peers and family members are essential in shaping their understanding, competence and confidence (Vygotsky 1978)

Research suggests that effective reintegration requires attention to emotional, academic and relational support (Greenberg 2023; Nnamani 2024). Emotional support helps learners manage anxiety, build resilience and develop a positive sense of self (Immordino-Yang & Damasio2007). Academic support provides tailored strategies and scaffolded instruction to bridge learning gaps and facilitate meaningful participation (Shaywitz 2020). Relational support fosters collaboration, social integration and a sense of belonging within the classroom.

Despite the recognition of these needs, there remains a gap in structured, evidence-based frameworks that guide teachers and families in facilitating successful reintegration (Nnamani 2024; Tarjiah et al. 2023). Current practices often focus on academic remediation while neglecting social and emotional dimensions of transition. Consequently, learners with dyslexia may experience fragmented support, inconsistent strategies and heightened stress during reintegration.

This study addresses this gap by developing a conceptual framework for reintegration that places the learner at the centre of the transition process. Grounded in liminality and sociocultural theory, the framework provides practical guidance for teachers, families, and support teams. It emphasises learner-centred support, structured scaffolding and staged implementation across pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal phases (Turner 1969; Vygotsky 1978). By focusing on the holistic needs of learners, the framework seeks to enhance their confidence, autonomy and sense of belonging in mainstream classrooms.

Background: Context of designing the framework

The development of this conceptual framework emerged from the author's Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research, which examined the reintegration of learners with dyslexia from remedial to mainstream classrooms. In South Africa, inclusive education policies promote equitable access to mainstream education (DBE 2001, 2022). However, teachers, families and support personnel often encounter significant challenges in providing coordinated support across academic, emotional and social domains during the transition (Nnamani 2024). This lack of structured guidance can lead to increased anxiety, social exclusion and inconsistent academic assistance for learners, ultimately undermining their confidence, self-efficacy and participation in the mainstream school context (Abu Omar et al. 2024; Tarjiah et al. 2023).

The study employed a qualitative, design-based research approach (McKenney & Reeves 2018). This methodology facilitated the iterative creation of a practical framework grounded in empirical evidence (Bakker 2018). A design-based approach is particularly useful, as it integrates research, theory and practice, resulting in solutions that are both relevant to the context and adaptable to real-world classroom scenarios (Bakker 2018; McKenney & Reeves 2018). The research process consisted of three key phases (Bradfield 2024; Nnamani 2024):

- *Identifying gaps in current reintegration practices:* The study used semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents and support personnel (Tarjiah et al. 2023). It also included classroom observations and document analysis, such as Individual Support Plans, the *South African School Act*, the South African Constitution, screening, identification, assessment and support policy, and school reports (DBE 2022; Nnamani 2024). The research highlighted significant challenges for learners with dyslexia during reintegration (Abu Omar et al. 2024; Bradfield 2024). Stakeholders recognised the needs of these learners (Tarjiah et al. 2023). However, they often lacked practical tools and coordinated strategies (Nnamani 2024). This gap limited support for emotional adjustment, scaffolded learning and social integration (Abu Omar et al. 2024).
- *Reviewing literature on transitional learning and inclusive practices:* A comprehensive literature review highlighted the importance of emotional support, scaffolded instruction and relational engagement. Liminality theory emphasised the transitional nature of reintegration, framing it as a period of uncertainty and identity negotiation (Hassan 2023; Turner 1969). Sociocultural theory highlighted the importance of socially mediated learning, in which teachers, peers and family members act as critical agents in supporting learners' adaptation and participation in new classroom environments (Vygotsky 1978).
- *Developing a conceptual framework to address identified gaps:* Drawing on empirical findings and theoretical perspectives, the framework was designed to provide structured guidance for teachers, families and support teams (Di Lisio et al. 2025; Nevill & Forsey 2023). The framework integrates emotional, academic and relational support, emphasising the interdependence of these dimensions in ensuring that learners can navigate the transition successfully, build confidence, and achieve meaningful participation in mainstream classrooms (Greenberg 2023; Nevill & Forsey 2023).

The resulting framework situates the learner at the centre of the reintegration process and is structured around three

stages: (1) pre-liminal (remedial school), (2) liminal (transition bridge) and (3) post-liminal (mainstream school) (Hassan 2023; Maksimović 2023). Each stage highlights the role of individual, relational and institutional factors in facilitating a successful transition (Hassan 2023). The pre-liminal stage focuses on preparation and recognition of learners' needs; the liminal stage emphasises scaffolding and support to navigate uncertainty; and the post-liminal stage targets consolidation, autonomy and social integration (Maksimović 2023; Turner 1969; Vygotsky 1978).

By integrating liminality theory and sociocultural theory, the framework not only provides practical guidance but also ensures that learners' transitional experiences are understood as dynamic and socially situated processes (Hassan 2023; Maksimović 2023; Turner 1969; Vygotsky 1978). This approach highlights the importance of coordinated contextually grounded interventions that promote learners' academic success, emotional well-being and social inclusion during reintegration (Hassan 2023).

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework developed in this study provides structured guidance for supporting learners with dyslexia as they transition from remedial to mainstream classrooms. It integrates theoretical perspectives of liminality and sociocultural learning, emphasises learner-centred practices, and situates support within three interdependent stages: (1) pre-liminal, (2) liminal and (3) post-liminal. The framework is designed to ensure that learners' emotional, academic and social needs are addressed simultaneously and systematically throughout the reintegration process (eds. Hlalele & Makoelle 2023; Turner 1969; Vygotsky 1978).

At the core of the framework are two interrelated components: (1) learner-centred support and (2) structured scaffolding. Learner-centred support positions the learner as an active participant in their own transition. It encourages decision-making, reflection and engagement with learning materials. This component prioritises the learner's agency, self-efficacy and confidence, recognising that successful reintegration depends on the learner's ability to navigate academic and social challenges independently (Bradfield 2024).

Although closely related, learner-centred support, structured support and scaffolding serve distinct functions within the framework. Learner-centred support positions the learner as an active participant whose needs, preferences and goals guide intervention planning. Structured support refers to the systematic organisation of resources, interventions and stakeholder responsibilities throughout the reintegration process. Scaffolding refers to the temporary instructional, social and emotional assistance provided by teachers, parents and support personnel, which is gradually withdrawn as learners develop competence, confidence and independence (Pol et al. 2015; Vygotsky 1978). Learner-centred support further promotes learner agency, self-determination, and active participation in decision-making processes (Tomlinson 2023a). Together, these components promote learner agency while ensuring sustained support throughout the transition process. Structured scaffolding complements learner-centred support by providing guidance and support from teachers, support personnel and family members. Scaffolding involves modelling strategies, providing feedback, facilitating problem-solving and gradually transferring responsibility to the learner. This approach ensures that engagement translates into meaningful learning outcomes while also addressing emotional and relational dimensions of the transition (Immordino-Yang & Damasio 2007; Shaywitz 2020).

The framework also aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which advocate for providing learners with multiple means of engagement, representation and action and expression (CAST 2018). Within the proposed framework, differentiated instructional strategies, scaffolded support, assistive technologies and flexible assessment practices ensure that learners with dyslexia can access learning in ways that accommodate individual strengths and needs (Shaywitz 2020; Tomlinson 2023a). By embedding UDL principles across the pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages, the framework promotes equitable participation and reduces barriers to learning, thereby strengthening inclusive educational practice.

The design and process of the framework

The design of the conceptual framework for reintegration of learners with dyslexia into mainstream classrooms was guided by a design-based research approach, which combines theoretical grounding with practical, context-specific solutions (Bakker 2018; McKenney & Reeves 2018). This approach was selected because it allows the iterative creation of interventions that are simultaneously evidence-informed and adaptable to real-world classroom environments. Design-based research is particularly appropriate for educational transitions, in which complex interactions between learner characteristics, teacher practices and institutional factors must be considered.

Conceptual underpinnings: Two theoretical perspectives shaped the framework's design: liminality theory and sociocultural learning theory.

Liminality theory conceptualises transition as a process of uncertainty and identity negotiation (Hassan 2023; Turner 1969). In the context of dyslexia reintegration, the liminal phase represents the period when learners leave the familiar remedial environment and confront the unfamiliar mainstream classroom. This theory informed the framework's staged design, emphasising preparation, guided transition and consolidation.

Sociocultural theory emphasises that learning occurs through social interactions and is mediated by more knowledgeable others, such as teachers, peers and family members (Hassan 2023; Vygotsky 1978). This perspective

underpins the framework's focus on relational scaffolding, collaborative engagement and guided support to promote meaningful participation in mainstream classrooms.

Figure 1 presents the Integrated Support Model for Reintegrating Learners with Dyslexia (ISM-RLD), illustrating the interaction between the pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages, the three support dimensions (emotional, academic and relational support), contextual influences and intended learner outcomes. The model demonstrates how learner-centred support, structured support and reflective feedback operate iteratively throughout the reintegration process.

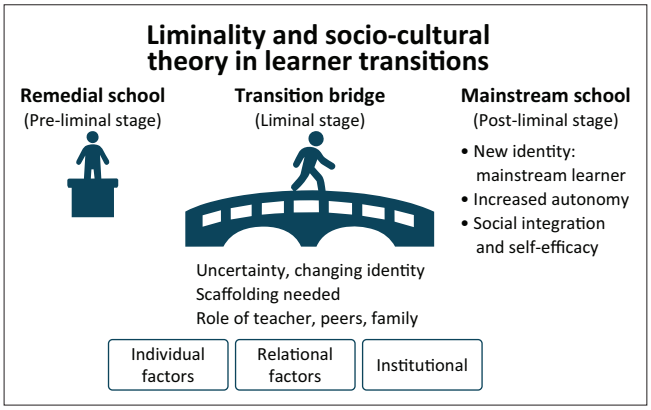
By integrating these theories, the framework ensures that learners' transitional experiences are understood as dynamic, socially situated and emotionally complex processes. It moves beyond academic remediation to address the holistic needs of learners with dyslexia.

Research methods and design

The methods included:

- *Semi-structured interviews* with a learner diagnosed with dyslexia, two teachers, two parents, the school-based support team coordinator and the district-based support team member to identify lived experiences, perceived challenges and current practices in reintegration (Abu Omar et al. 2024; Tarjiah et al. 2023).
- *Classroom observations* to examine how learners navigated academic, social and emotional challenges in real-time. This provided insight into gaps in current support practices (Tarjiah et al. 2023).
- *Document analysis* of Individual Support Plans, school policies and inclusive education guidelines, to align framework design with regulatory and institutional requirements (DBE 2022; Nnamani 2024).

The data were analysed thematically following the approach described by Creswell and Poth (2018), which involved organising the data, coding significant statements, identifying recurring patterns and developing themes that represented participants' experiences and perceptions. Key themes included emotional distress, inconsistent scaffolding, limited social inclusion and fragmented communication between remedial and mainstream contexts.



Note: The transition bridge illustrates the movement of learners with dyslexia from remedial to mainstream schooling through pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages. Drawing on Liminality Theory and Sociocultural Theory, the figure highlights the interaction of individual, relational and institutional factors, and the academic, emotional and relational support required to facilitate successful reintegration and a sense of belonging within mainstream classrooms.

FIGURE 1: The transition bridge: An Integrated Support Model for Reintegrating Learners with dyslexia.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Johannesburg Education Research Ethics Committee (Reference No. SEM 2-2024-141). Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

Results

Identifying the problem

The need for this conceptual framework emerged from persistent challenges observed during the reintegration of learners with dyslexia from remedial to mainstream classrooms. Teachers, parents and support personnel frequently recognised learners' needs but lacked structured strategies to address them effectively (Thompson et al. 2025). Existing interventions were often reactive and fragmented, focusing primarily on academic content while neglecting emotional and social dimensions of the transition (Abu Omar et al. 2024; Tarjiah et al. 2023).

Learners often struggled with adjusting to new classroom expectations, peer interactions and academic demands. Anxiety, low confidence and social uncertainty were common, yet teachers and support personnel were uncertain about how to scaffold learning effectively or provide consistent emotional support (Buckley & Sullivan 2021). Communication between remedial and mainstream schools was frequently insufficient, resulting in a lack of coordination among stakeholders. These gaps highlighted the need for a comprehensive framework that could guide teachers, support teams and families in facilitating smooth transitions while addressing learners' holistic needs (Nnamani 2024).

Moreover, a review of existing literature confirmed that practical, step-by-step guidance for reintegration is scarce. While inclusive education policies advocate for participation and equity, they rarely provide mechanisms to operationalise these ideals in daily classroom practice. Similarly, research emphasises the importance of social and emotional support but offers limited guidance on how to integrate these aspects systematically with academic interventions (Bradfield 2024; Hassan 2023). The identified problem, therefore, is not simply the presence of learning challenges, but the absence of a coordinated, theory-informed and evidence-based framework that can holistically guide reintegration.

Assumptions informing the framework

A conceptual framework is grounded in certain assumptions that clarify its intended scope and application.

The development of this framework drew on three key assumptions informed by the PhD study.

The first assumption is that learners transitioning from remedial to mainstream settings face heightened academic, social and emotional demands (Borman et al. 2019; Carpendale et al. 2025). They must navigate more complex curricula, form new peer and teacher relationships, and demonstrate self-regulation and autonomy (Bardach et al. 2023). While the study focused on a single learner, the framework's principles scaffolded support, relational engagement and emotional guidance are designed to be adaptable across various learners and grade levels.

The second assumption concerns the educational context itself. Classrooms vary in structure, policy, resources and teacher expertise. Reintegration strategies must therefore be practical, contextually responsive and flexible (MacCullagh, Bosanquet & Badcock 2017). They must balance curriculum coverage with individual learning needs, ensuring that the learner's progress is supported without compromising broader instructional goals (DBE 2012, 2022).

The third assumption relates to the essential characteristics required for successful transition. Learners need emotional, academic and social scaffolding to manage anxiety, build confidence and develop meaningful relationships within mainstream classrooms (Mahoney et al. 2020; Valiente et al. 2020). This assumption aligns with liminality theory, which conceptualises transition as a period of uncertainty and identity negotiation (Turner 1969), and sociocultural theory, which emphasises the social mediation of learning as critical for adaptation and competence development (Hassan 2023; Vygotsky 1978).

These assumptions have important practical implications for teachers, families, School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs) and District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs). They underscore the need for proactive planning, coordinated support structures, differentiated instruction and ongoing communication among stakeholders throughout the reintegration process. For teachers, the assumptions highlight the importance of adapting instructional practices and monitoring learner progress. For families, they emphasise active involvement and collaboration with schools to support continuity between home and school environments. For SBSTs and DBSTs, they reinforce the need for coordinated assessment, intervention planning and ongoing support to facilitate successful transitions. The assumptions also emphasise that successful reintegration requires attention to emotional and social development in addition to academic achievement. By explicitly stating these assumptions, the framework clarifies its scope and purpose, providing guidance for teachers, support personnel and families while allowing for adaptation to different learners and contexts.

Characteristics of reintegration support

The framework identifies three interrelated dimensions of support essential for successful reintegration: emotional, academic and relational support. These dimensions are grounded in empirical findings and theoretical perspectives, reflecting the learner's needs for holistic guidance during the transition.

Emotional support focuses on helping learners manage anxiety, develop resilience and build a positive sense of self. Transitioning to a mainstream classroom often introduces unfamiliar expectations and social dynamics, which can trigger stress or feelings of inadequacy. By providing reassurance, encouragement and strategies for coping with challenges, teachers and support personnel enable learners to engage meaningfully in learning activities while fostering self-efficacy and resilience (Bradfield 2024; Immordino-Yang & Damasio 2007).

Academic support ensures that learners can meet curriculum expectations while accommodating their specific learning needs. Scaffolded instruction, modelling, guided practice and differentiated strategies help learners bridge knowledge gaps and participate effectively in classroom activities. Academic support is most effective when integrated with emotional and relational support, enabling learners to remain motivated, engaged and confident (Shaywitz 2020).

Relational support emphasises the social aspects of learning. Interaction with peers, teachers and family members provides a network that fosters inclusion, collaboration and a sense of belonging (Martinot et al. 2022). Relational support helps learners navigate social expectations, develop communication and problem-solving skills, and establish supportive relationships essential for long-term academic and social success (Borman et al. 2019). These three dimensions operate interdependently. Emotional support enhances learners' confidence to engage academically and socially. Academic scaffolding ensures learners can participate meaningfully in curriculum activities. Relational support reinforces social inclusion and collaborative learning (Gaitas et al. 2024). By integrating these dimensions, the framework provides a holistic, learner-centred approach, ensuring that support is comprehensive and continuous throughout the reintegration process.

Peer relationships play a particularly important role during reintegration. Learners with dyslexia often rely on supportive peer networks to enhance their sense of belonging and participation within mainstream classrooms. Practical strategies may include peer mentoring programmes, cooperative learning activities, structured peer-support groups and classroom practices that foster respect for learner diversity. Such approaches can reduce social isolation, strengthen confidence and encourage meaningful participation in academic and social activities (Martinot et al. 2022; Shao & Kang 2022). Peer-support also contributes to learner engagement, social adjustment and academic resilience during periods of educational transition (Valiente et al. 2020).

Planning and implementation

Effective reintegration of learners with dyslexia requires careful planning, coordinated action and ongoing monitoring across multiple stakeholders. The conceptual framework operationalises these strategies through the Integrated Support Model for Reintegrating Learners with Dyslexia (ISM-RLD), which provides a structured, evidence-informed approach to planning, implementing and reflecting on interventions. This model integrates learner-centred support, structured scaffolding and collaboration between the remedial school, mainstream school, families and school-based and district-based support teams (Emery 2020; Gaitas et al. 2024; Hassan 2023).

Planning phase

Planning begins in the remedial school prior to the learner's transition. Teachers and support personnel assess the learner's academic readiness, emotional preparedness and social skills. Individualised support plans are developed to target areas requiring scaffolded intervention (Pol et al. 2015). These plans may include skill-building exercises, guided problem-solving and opportunities for learners to develop self-regulation and confidence. Preparing the learner in this way helps to reduce anxiety and ensures that the transition is grounded in their unique needs and abilities (Engelbrecht et al. 2021).

Concurrently, the mainstream school undergoes readiness assessment. This involves evaluating classroom structures, teacher preparedness and the availability of assistive tools, such as digital readers, laptops or adapted assessment materials. Teachers receive targeted professional development on inclusive practices, differentiation strategies and scaffolding techniques (Nevill & Forsey 2023). Support personnel collaborate to establish safe spaces for emotional regulation, peer mentorship structures and systems to monitor learner progress. This pre-transition preparation ensures that the receiving environment is responsive to learners' needs from day 1 (Shaywitz 2020).

Implementation phase

The implementation phase operationalises the framework across the aforementioned stages, which are pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages.

Pre-liminal stage: During this stage, learners are introduced to strategies that support academic readiness, emotional self-regulation and social competence. Teachers scaffold learning through structured exercises, guided reflection and modelling of problem-solving strategies. Emotional support is provided through reassurance, positive reinforcement and strategies to manage stress and uncertainty (Bradfield 2024; Immordino-Yang & Damasio 2007). Relational support begins through structured interactions with peers and teachers to develop trust, collaboration and early social integration.

Liminal stage: It represents the transitional bridge, during which learners face new academic and social expectations. Scaffolded support intensifies as teachers, support personnel and family members guide learners through uncertainties in classroom routines, assessment demands and peer interactions (Tomlinson 2023b). Individual factors, such as motivation, self-regulation and adaptive learning strategies, are actively monitored. Relational factors, including teacher engagement, peer collaboration and family involvement, are leveraged to support social adjustment. Institutional factors, such as classroom practices and curriculum structures, are adjusted as needed to accommodate learner needs. Teachers employ reflective questioning, feedback and guided problem-solving to promote metacognition, resilience and self-efficacy (Pol et al. 2015).

Post-liminal stage: In this stage, learners consolidate the skills and strategies acquired during the transition. Academic scaffolding becomes less intensive as learners demonstrate autonomy, while relational and emotional support continues to reinforce inclusion and confidence (Hlalele & Makoelle 2023). Teachers monitor academic progress and social participation, providing targeted interventions where necessary to sustain engagement. Learners develop a sense of belonging and actively participate in classroom activities, reflecting the successful integration of academic, social and emotional support (Hassan 2023; Maksimović 2023).

Operational components of Integrated Support Model for Reintegrating Learners with dyslexia

The ISM-RLD 5-Component Model structures planning and implementation into actionable elements:

- *Learner-Centred Transition Planning (LCTP)* involves developing and reviewing individualised support plans that consider learners' academic, social and emotional needs. It ensures that interventions are tailored and responsive to each learner.
- *Emotional and Identity Development (EID)* focuses on fostering resilience, self-confidence and a positive learner identity. Counselling, mentorship and reflective exercises support learners in navigating transitional stress and building agency (Immordino-Yang & Damasio 2007; Mtshweni 2024).
- *School and System Readiness Certification (SSRC)* ensures that mainstream schools are prepared to receive learners. This includes teacher training, classroom adjustments and the provision of necessary resources and assistive tools (Shaywitz 2020).
- *Instructional Differentiation and Assistive Support (ID)* provides scaffolding and adaptation within the classroom. Differentiated instruction, curriculum modifications and assistive technologies enable learners to access content effectively and engage meaningfully with lessons (Bradfield 2024).
- *Family Engagement and Support Planning (FESP)* actively involves parents and caregivers. Families are partners in the transition, maintaining continuity between

home and school and reinforcing strategies to support academic, emotional and social growth (Tarjiah et al. 2023).

Reflection and feedback

Reflection is a critical element throughout the reintegration process. Learners are encouraged to assess their learning experiences, recognise effective strategies and develop metacognitive skills. Teachers and support teams continuously evaluate the impact of interventions, adapting scaffolding and support based on observed outcomes. This iterative reflection ensures that the framework remains responsive to individual learner needs and evolving classroom contexts (Schneider & Stern 2010; Schön 1983).

Through this integrated planning and implementation process, the framework provides a holistic, evidence-informed and learner-centred approach to reintegration. It ensures that learners are supported academically, emotionally and socially, fostering confidence, autonomy and a sense of belonging in mainstream classrooms. The ISM-RLD model operationalises the framework in a way that is practical, adaptable and scalable across different educational contexts.

Discussion

Limitations

Despite its practical and theoretical contributions, the framework has certain limitations. Firstly, it was developed based on the experiences of a single learner, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. While the framework's principles are designed to be adaptable, further testing across diverse learners, grade levels and school contexts is necessary to confirm its broader applicability.

Secondly, although the framework incorporates teacher training, SBST and DBST involvement, and scaffolded support strategies, it has not yet been piloted in multiple classroom contexts. Its effectiveness in different educational environments, particularly in resource-constrained settings, remains to be evaluated. Furthermore, implementation may be particularly challenging in under-resourced schools where access to specialist personnel, assistive technologies and ongoing professional development opportunities is limited. In such contexts, schools may adopt scalable alternatives such as peer-support initiatives, low-cost assistive resources, collaborative teacher planning and strengthened SBST involvement to support successful reintegration

Thirdly, the framework's implementation depends on the availability of resources, including trained personnel, assistive technologies and supportive classroom structures. Variability in these resources across schools and districts may affect the feasibility and fidelity of implementation (Shaywitz 2020).

Future research

Future research should focus on pilot testing and refining the framework with multiple learners across diverse school contexts. Longitudinal studies could examine the sustained impact of structured reintegration on academic achievement, social inclusion and emotional well-being. Such studies would provide evidence for the framework's scalability and adaptability to various educational settings.

Further research could also explore professional development strategies for teachers and support teams to strengthen their capacity in facilitating inclusive transitions. Investigations into the optimal use of assistive technologies, collaborative practices between home and school, and the role of peer mentorship in promoting inclusion would further enhance the framework's practical applicability.

Finally, studies could examine the integration of the framework into policy implementation to ensure that inclusive education strategies are operationalised effectively at both school and district levels. This would bridge the gap between conceptual guidance, classroom practice and systemic support, ultimately improving outcomes for learners with dyslexia transitioning to mainstream education.

Conclusion

The conceptual framework developed in this study offers a structured, evidence-informed approach to supporting learners with dyslexia during their transition from remedial to mainstream classrooms. By integrating the principles of liminality theory and sociocultural learning, the framework provides a holistic perspective that addresses learners' academic, emotional and social needs. It recognises that successful reintegration is not only about mastering curriculum content, but also involves navigating social dynamics, building confidence and developing a sense of belonging (Turner 1969; Vygotsky 1978).

Central to the framework are learner-centred support and structured scaffolding, which operate interdependently across three stages: (1) pre-liminal, (2) liminal and (3) post-liminal. The framework situates learners at the centre of the transition process while emphasising collaboration between teachers, support personnel, families and institutional structures. The ISM-RLD 5-Component Model operationalises the framework by providing clear guidance on planning, implementation and reflection. This ensures that learners receive consistent, coordinated and responsive support throughout the reintegration process (Shaywitz 2020).

Ultimately, the framework fosters gradual adaptation, builds learner autonomy and promotes meaningful participation in mainstream classrooms. By addressing the emotional, academic and relational dimensions of transition, it strengthens inclusive education practice and contributes to bridging the gap between policy, theory and classroom application (Bradfield 2024; Tarjiah et al. 2023).

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Competing interests

The authors, Siboniso J. Selepe and Maximus M. Sefotho, declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

CRediT authorship contribution

Siboniso J. Selepe: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Maximus M. Sefotho: Supervision. All authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication, and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are not openly available and are available from the corresponding author, Siboniso J. Selepe, upon reasonable request.

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