WhatsApp integration by business studies teachers to promote collaboration among learners

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The pervasiveness of various social media platforms and its use among young people have strengthened collaborative learning across different contexts. With this study I explored the integration of WhatsApp by business studies teachers to promote collaboration among learners. This qualitative study is located within an interpretive paradigm and framed on social constructivism theory. Six business studies teachers were purposively selected from 6 secondary schools located in Mkhanyakude district in the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. I found that WhatsApp is important in promoting collaborative learning among learners and that integrating WhatsApp in business studies instructional practices facilitates networking among learners. However, it appeared that collaboration among learners was mainly restricted to online and afterschool hours. I therefore recommend that business studies teachers ensure that the same level of collaboration among learners on WhatsApp also occurs in business studies classrooms. This may be achieved by incorporating educational material used during WhatsApp-based instruction in their lessons for learners to see the value of virtual and physical collaborating with their peers.

Keywords: business studies; collaboration; rural based; teaching; WhatsApp; WhatsApp group

Introduction
In South Africa subjects like business studies benefit from technology integration due to the compatibility with the curriculum (Govender & Maistry, 2012). Business studies, also known as business education in some regions (Oguejiofor, 2020) prepares learners for the modern working environment characterised by technological advancements. The aim with the subject is to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for meaningful, responsible, and productive engagement in business activities (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011). Given the goal to equip learners with skills required in the 21st-century business environment, it is essential for business studies teachers to integrate technology into their classrooms. Some business studies teachers, therefore, integrate social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, in their classrooms to enhance instructional practices. The adoption of WhatsApp in teaching business studies may not be challenging for many learners as they are exposed to it and they often use WhatsApp for daily communication, usually outside the classroom (Oguejiofor, 2020).

WhatsApp is increasingly evolving into a promising educational tool that has the potential to promote collaboration during the teaching and learning process (Van den Berg & Mudau, 2022). This is because WhatsApp enables users to send content like documents, pictures, audio clips, videos, and to make video calls (Udenze & Oshionebo, 2020); hence it can be used as a learning tool to facilitate collaboration among learners. Furthermore, WhatsApp enables users to call, share locations, share screens and secure messages. These features can support and enhance collaborative learning among business studies learners. Nyembe and Howard (2020) caution that the goal of integrating WhatsApp in the teaching and learning process should not just be the integration but it should be informed by the pedagogical value it adds to learners' learning. This assertion suggests that business studies teachers should not merely integrate WhatsApp but should be resolute about why and how WhatsApp is integrated to enhance collaboration among learners. Several studies have revealed that local and international teachers are integrating WhatsApp into instructional practices (Gcabashe & Adebola, 2023; Nsabayezu, Iyamuremye, Kwitonda & Mbonyiryivuze, 2020; Nyembe & Howard, 2020). It is, therefore, important to take this further and explore how business studies teachers integrate WhatsApp to promote collaboration among learners.

Problem Statement
The integration of WhatsApp in teaching and learning was accelerated by the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and it continues to gain traction after the pandemic (Chirinda, Ndlovu & Spangenberg, 2021). However, it emerged from several studies that the integration of WhatsApp in teaching and learning remains underutilised (Rahmadi, 2020; Udenze & Oshionebo, 2020). Teachers and learners mainly use WhatsApp to share learning materials and documents (Udenze & Oshionebo, 2020). In other words, WhatsApp is used as an additional tool to support teaching and learning, and the WhatsApp groups are mainly created and controlled by the teachers. In essence, some WhatsApp groups merely mimic a traditional classroom where the teacher dominates the activities that take place in the learning environment while learners remain passive (Rahmadi, 2020). From the above, it can de deduced that WhatsApp-based instruction in schools needs to be

developed to ensure that meaningful teaching and learning occur because WhatsApp is one of the instructional tools with the potential to facilitate collaborative learning among learners (Nsabayezu et al., 2020). In other words, the integration of WhatsApp can enable learners to collaborate by initiating conversations, constructing meaning from the content learnt and conducting peer teaching. With this study I investigated how teachers integrated WhatsApp to promote collaborative learning among business studies learners.

Research Questions

- How does integrating WhatsApp into business studies instructional practices promote collaborative learning among learners?

Literature Review

WhatsApp can enable a stimulating learning environment that allows learners to actively participate in learning. This is due to its ability to create immediate connections among individuals from different locations and backgrounds (Daramola & Umoru, 2021). Integrating WhatsApp in teaching and learning in business studies instructional practices allows learners from different backgrounds to collaborate without limitations. Learners can continuously share ideas concerning business studies content covered in the classroom. Vera, Campuzano and Laz (2020) refer to such exercise as collaborative learning, where learners work in groups to solve problems, complete tasks, or produce a concrete product. During collaboration, learners exchange ideas that can enrich their learning experiences (Shin, Kim & Song, 2020).

Collaboration among learners is also encouraged in the business studies curriculum as it aims to produce learners that are prepared for the contemporary business environment (Majola, 2020) where collaboration is key for the success of business practitioners (Brown, Brocken & Balkenende, 2019). WhatsApp can play a significant role in supporting collaboration among business studies learners and between teachers and learners. Ajani (2021) postulates that WhatsApp enables learners to create collaborative learning communities in which they can conduct group activities and discussions beyond the classroom environment. In other words, the integration of WhatsApp in learning keeps learners engaged in learning activities for longer periods. Learners from rural areas can greatly benefit from it.

The use of WhatsApp helps introverted learners to actively participate in learning activities because it reduces their anxiety when asking questions in the presence of other learners (Nyembe & Howard, 2020). This suggests that WhatsApp provides a platform for shy learners to actively participate in discussions with their peers and teachers. Participating in discussions with peers on WhatsApp has the potential to nurture the social skills of less confident or shy learners. WhatsApp may, therefore, help such learners to gain confidence to interact with their peers. The extended exposure to peers helps learners to develop the corporation character, which is vital for collaborative learning to thrive.

Several scholars have revealed that by creating WhatsApp groups learners can easily engage in collaborative learning activities (Minalla, 2018; Susilawati & Supriyatno, 2020; Udenze & Oshionebo, 2020). The capacity of WhatsApp to accommodate a relatively large number of participants is beneficial. WhatsApp can accommodate more than 1,000 participants with equal access to discussions and information shared on the platform (Mudavadi, Tully & Lomoywara, 2024). Many learners can be accommodated in one group, which may give them access to diverse learners who think differently. Susilawati and Supriyatno (2020) suggest that WhatsApp groups have pedagogical, social, and technological benefits for learners. This is because WhatsApp groups enable learners to communicate and share academic information deemed relevant to their peers. Learning materials such as notes, previous question papers, marking guidelines and links to educational materials may be shared via WhatsApp groups. This may strengthen collaboration and interaction among learners because they learn to assist one another while learning.

Naghdipour and Manca (2023) stress that WhatsApp groups promote collaboration activities without having to pay a high price and there is no need for learners to acquire additional hardware. This suggests that WhatsApp groups may enable learners to engage in collaborative activities without incurring costs such as travelling to meet their peers in a physical venue. Learners may engage in collaborative activities wherever they are. Qamar, Riyadi and Wulandari (2019) observe that using WhatsApp groups for teaching allows learners to engage in conversations without limitations or boundaries. Further, Baishya and Maheshwari (2020) assert that learners who participate in WhatsApp groups may use voice messages when engaging in discussions with their peers, and this feature may be extended to discuss business studies content. This WhatsApp feature distinguishes it from other social media platforms.

It is also evident from the existing literature that collaboration in business studies has certain advantages. Collaboration helps learners to acquire skills needed in the corporate world (Venter, 2021). This simply means that the integration of WhatsApp in teaching helps learners develop collaboration skills, which are some of the skills required to operate in the current business world. Venter (2021) emphasises that learners need to acquire collaboration skills for them to operate

meaningfully in the 21st-century business environment where teamwork is essential. Therefore, business studies teachers should integrate platforms such as WhatsApp groups to equip learners with collaboration skills. Collaborating through WhatsApp groups may also provide a platform where learners may be given authentic tasks in which they actively participate (Avci & Adiguzel, 2017). Teachers may use such tasks to enhance learners' collaboration skills needed in the world of work.

Despite several benefits of WhatsApp in fostering collaboration in teaching and learning, the use of WhatsApp also has several shortcomings. WhatsApp has been criticised for the fact that some learners with connection challenges may be excluded from group discussions as WhatsApp is an internet-based platform (Jere, Jona & Lukose, 2019). This may exacerbate inequality among learners because those who have smartphones and access to the internet may enjoy learning for longer periods, while those who do not have such access may be left behind. This was confirmed in a study by Indiran, Ismail and Ab Rashid (2022) who found that the lack of smartphones and poor access to the internet pose real challenges to internet-based instruction. Furthermore, Indiran et al. (2022) underscore that although most learners are active users of WhatsApp for social purposes some learners tend to be passive, unprepared to learn actively, collaboratively and independently via WhatsApp. Having learners who are inactive in WhatsApp-based instruction can negatively impact collaborative learning that business studies teachers intend to facilitate through WhatsApp.

In addition, the use of WhatsApp groups in the teaching and learning process may distract learners from their studies (Qamar et al., 2019). If learners are unregulated in the use of WhatsApp, they may share inappropriate images, messages, and videos, which may disturb others from engaging in meaningful learning. To avoid this, teachers need to monitor the group discussions in WhatsApp groups closely. This implies that they might be required to do extra work when controlling group discussions that take place (Jere et al., 2019). Darkwa and Antwi (2021) highlight the importance of teacher presence on internet-based instruction and indicate that it helps to shape learners' level of cognition. Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia and Koole (2020) categorise teacher presence in internet-based instruction as cognitive presence where the teacher takes the learners' willingness and readiness to participate in online instruction into consideration. In other words, business studies teachers should be considerate of learners' willingness to participate in WhatsApp-based instruction to promote collaboration among the learners.

The second type of teacher presence in internet-based instruction is their social presence (Rapanta et al., 2020) which includes communication between the teacher and the learners. Through WhatsApp-based instruction, business studies teachers are able to communicate with the learners for a longer period of time and provide support to them beyond the constraints of time and place. Indiran et al. (2022) underscore that communicating with learners for longer periods helps teachers to establish and maintain relationship with their learners. Teacher presence in internet-based instruction is facilitatory and embodies teachers' resources and activities. Business studies teachers may use WhatsApp to provide learning activities and materials that will help foster collaboration among learners. In spite of their emphasis on teachers' presence in internet-based instruction, Rapanta et al. (2020) caution teacher burnout that may be caused by the continuous engagements between teachers and learners. To avoid burnout, business studies teachers can develop a schedule that would help to manage engagements with the learners in WhatsApp-based instruction.

Based on the reviewed literature above, it is evident that there is a paucity of studies that focus on the role of WhatsApp in promoting collaborative learning among business studies learners, especially in the South African context. The evidence shows that studies on this subject were conducted in contexts outside South Africa, while studies conducted in South Africa mainly focus on higher education. For example, La Hanisi, Risdiany, Dwi Utami and Suliswaro (2018) conducted a study in Indonesia in which they explored the use of WhatsApp in promoting collaborative learning in English teaching and learning. Similarly, Avci and Adiguzel (2017) investigated the use of WhatsApp to support collaborative learning in English as foreign language in Türkiye. In Saudi Arabia, Minalla (2018) conducted a study investigating the effect of WhatsApp groups in enhancing English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' verbal interaction outside the classroom.

As mentioned above, studies that have been conducted in South Africa on this subject have mainly focused on higher education. For example, Thaba-Nkadimene (2020) explored the influence of WhatsApp use on collaborative pedagogy by pre-service teachers during teaching practice. A study by Rambe, Chipunza and Ng'ambi (2020) focused on the use of WhatsApp by students to co-create learning resources at one university in South Africa. Van den Berg and Mudau (2022) elicited students' views on the use of WhatsApp groups to support online teaching and learning during COVID-19 in an open distance education context. Because of the literature gap identified in existing

literature, I decided to explore the integration of WhatsApp by business studies teachers in rural-based South African secondary schools to promote collaborative learning among learners.

Theoretical Framework
The theory of social constructivism was adopted as the lens for this study. Social constructivism was propounded by Lev Vygotsky in the late 1920s (Akpan, Igwe, Mpamah & Okoro, 2020). Social constructivists regard knowledge as being that which learners construct in collaboration with their peers, teachers, and other knowledgeable individuals (Akpan et al., 2020). This assertion suggests that learners do not create knowledge individually but with their counterparts, teachers, and other knowledgeable individuals. Therefore, in the learning environment where WhatsApp is integrated to facilitate collaborative learning, joint knowledge construction among business studies learners is possible. Doolittle and Hicks (2003) mention that social constructivism emphasises the social nature of knowledge, which cannot be attained solely through cognitive inquiry. This view insinuates that business studies learners should socially construct knowledge for meaningful learning to occur. Akpan et al. (2020) add that meaningful learning in the context of social constructivism happens when learners engage in group work, share ideas, brainstorm, and try to discover answers to problems or invent something new to add to existing knowledge.

Social constructivism requires of learners to use their prior knowledge and experiences to formulate new, related, and adaptive concepts in learning (Mwunda, 2014). This means that Vygotsky, as the proponent of social constructivism, perceives learners as individuals who come to class with knowledge gained from their social environments. Through WhatsApp-based instruction, business studies learners can share their prior knowledge with their peers. This could enable teachers to detect learners' level of understanding of a particular topic, which may help them to tailor the instruction to the level of learners' understanding. Furthermore, having learners showcasing their prior knowledge through WhatsApp can help to spark engagements and debate among learners on WhatsApp groups, which is important in facilitating knowledge construction (McIntyre & Sobel, 2019).

Furthermore, interaction among learners is a potent factor for effective learning to occur in classrooms that promote social constructivism. Interaction between an individual learner with peers, teachers and other knowledgeable individuals is key in knowledge construction in a social constructivist environment (Mishra, 2023). It enables learners to learn how to articulate their ideas clearly as well as collaborate on tasks

effectively (Chand, 2016). So, integrating WhatsApp to foster collaborative learning can help to facilitate the sharing of ideas and interaction among business studies learners.

Based on the discussion above, it can be inferred that integrating WhatsApp to foster collaborative learning in business studies classrooms is in line with the aspirations of social constructivists. To integrate WhatsApp in the teaching of business studies teachers need to create WhatsApp groups where learners can solve problems, discover new knowledge, and share ideas collaboratively (Thaba-Nkadimene, 2020) in line with the beliefs of social constructivism. Hence, social constructivism theory was deemed a suitable theoretical lens to underpin this study.

Methodology
In this qualitative study I adopted an interpretive paradigm as its philosophical orientation. Adopting the interpretive paradigm allowed the participants to recount their personal experiences (Cuthbertson, Robb & Blair, 2020) on how they integrated WhatsApp into teaching business studies to foster collaborative learning in a rural setting. Furthermore, the qualitative approach was deemed suitable for the study since it aims to investigate the integration of WhatsApp by business studies teachers to implement collaborative learning. Nieuwenhuis (2007) asserts that qualitative research approach helps researchers to study the experiences, meanings, and perspectives of the study participants in their natural setting. The population of the study were all teachers who taught business studies and integrated WhatsApp in their pedagogical practices in schools located in the Mkhanyakude district in KwaZulu-Natal. From the population, a sample of six business studies teachers were purposefully selected from six secondary schools located in the Mkhanyakude District. The six secondary schools were selected on the basis that they offered business studies as a subject from Grades 10 to 12, while the teachers were selected on the basis that they taught business studies at the selected schools and integrated WhatsApp in their instructional practices. Adopting purposive sampling to select the participants allows a researcher to select the participants who are likely to have in-depth and rich answers to the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data that assisted in answering the research question. The adoption of the semi-structured interviews assisted me in collecting in-depth data from the participants. This is because this kind of interview enables a researcher to ask probing questions (Naz, Gulab & Aslam, 2022) which allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through the eyes of the participants.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis technique was followed in analysing the data. I started by transcribing the raw data while listening to the recorded interviews. I subsequently immersed myself in the data by reading and rereading the transcriptions several times. After familiarising myself with the raw data, I allocated codes to make meaning thereof. Coding was followed by developing initial themes that were used to report the findings. In the process of developing the main themes, some codes were merged while others were revised to ensure that data analysis was coherent and logical.

Ethical Considerations

The principles of ethics in research involve determining what is right or wrong (Suri, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to thoroughly examine every part of a research study to identify any potential breach of ethical principles. Permission to conduct the study was sought from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. I also sought permission to conduct the study from the principals of the schools that were sampled for the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the academic institution where the study was conducted. Furthermore, ethical research requires obtaining informed consent, especially when human participants are involved (Millum & Bromwich, 2021). During the process of conducting this study, informed consent was obtained from the participants. The participants were also informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. The principle of anonymity was also ensured by using pseudonyms when reporting the findings to protect the identity of the participants.

Findings

In this study I explored the integration of WhatsApp by business studies teachers to promote collaboration among learners. During the analysis of the data collected through individual face-to-face interviews, three themes emerged. These themes are: WhatsApp fosters collaboration among learners, WhatsApp integration fosters networking among learners, and the integration of WhatsApp strengthens the relationship between business studies teachers and learners.

It is important to indicate that pseudonyms (Teacher #1, et cetera) were used to present the views of the six teachers who participated in the study.

WhatsApp Fosters Collaboration Among Learners

It emerged from the interviews with business studies teachers that the integration of WhatsApp in teaching and learning promotes collaboration among learners. The participants agreed that integrating WhatsApp into their pedagogical practices enhanced how they implemented collaborative learning. For example, Teacher #2 asserted that the integration of WhatsApp in the pedagogical practices helped learners to learn from one another. Teacher #2 said: *"The integration of WhatsApp in teaching and learning helps learners to learn from each other because those who got information can share with others using WhatsApp. This means they collaborate and work together without relying more on the teacher."*

Teacher #1 alluded that due to WhatsApp integration in business studies, learners could access the learning material that they could not access due to a lack of technological resources at their school. She indicated that some learners received learning material such as additional notes from other schools or the internet and shared them with their peers through WhatsApp groups. Teacher #1 mentioned the following:

> *Some learners get learning materials such as Gauteng Department of Education notes and share with their peers, even before me as a teacher. This is because learners are part of other business studies WhatsApp groups where even I don't belong as a teacher.*

Teacher #4 added that the use of WhatsApp promoted teamwork among learners. She said: *"The integration of WhatsApp promotes collaboration and teamwork among learners because they support each other with learning activities."*

When asked about the importance of collaborating via WhatsApp, Teacher #6 stressed that exposing learners to collaborative learning through WhatsApp would have an everlasting benefit for business studies learners. She said:

> *Encouraging learners to collaborate on WhatsApp through discussion, sharing ideas and solving problems together will not only assist learners to pass business studies, but it also equips them with skills required in the workplace. You cannot work in isolation; you must work with others. As an employer or employee, you network with other people in order to accomplish a given task.*

Teacher #5 also agreed that the integration of WhatsApp in business studies teaching helps learners acquire communication and collaboration skills needed in the workplace. She mentioned:

> *I think the use of WhatsApp nurtures learners' collaboration and communication skills because when using WhatsApp in business studies, they communicate with their peers both from the school and other schools, and they communicate with the teacher. This teaches them not only to be good communicators and collaborators, but also, they learn to be disciplined when approaching other people.*

From the teachers' responses it became clear that they believed that WhatsApp integration in business studies instructional practices benefited the learners. Teachers indicated that the integration of WhatsApp in business studies helped learners to

access additional educational resources. For learners from schools located in rural areas this can be helpful because some schools lack technological resources to enable learners to access learning materials. By using WhatsApp, learners may have access to recent educational resources such as notes, real business scenarios, educational videos and previous question papers and marking guidelines. In this way learners will have access to multiple educational resources to supplement their prescribed textbooks and the lessons presented by the teacher.

Interestingly, as business studies teachers were recounting how WhatsApp integration promoted collaboration among learners, it appeared that teachers focused on collaboration that happens outside the classroom. From their sentiments, it was not clear how they use additional resources shared by learners through the subject WhatsApp group to advance collaborative learning within the classroom. It is believed that teachers can play an active role in promoting collaborative learning among learners beyond the online collaboration that happens in the subject WhatsApp group. The teacher may use the additional resources such as educational videos, real business scenarios and notes shared by learners in the WhatsApp group to enrich the lesson. Such actions would even benefit learners that have limited access to WhatsApp due to connectivity issues or lack of data which allows access to multiple resources.

WhatsApp Integration Fosters Networking Among Learners

From the interviews it became clear that the use of WhatsApp and WhatsApp groups in business studies helped learners to have contact with learners in other schools. This is referred to as networking and it assists learners in learning to collaborate with diverse people from different contexts. They may share ideas and engage in peer teaching where they explain how a particular business studies concept or content was tackled in their respective schools. Such engagements expose learners to different perspectives used by their respective teachers in clarifying specific concepts or content.

Teacher #3 said:

> The integration of WhatsApp in business studies enables learners to network with other learners from other schools. They communicate regarding the schoolwork or assignments. Such communications help learners to acquire knowledge from different angles because as teachers, we don't explain the topics similarly.

Teacher #5 added that WhatsApp integration enabled learners to network to the extent that they engaged in peer teaching. She said: "*I think WhatsApp integration in business studies allows learners to share information through WhatsApp*

groups and even address the questions of other learners using the platform."

Despite Teacher #3 acknowledging the role of WhatsApp in facilitating networking among learners from different backgrounds, he pointed out that the use of WhatsApp could potentially lead to plagiarism among some learners. He mentioned that some learners used networking to plagiarise the work of their peers from other schools because they thought that their teachers would not detect that the work was plagiarised due to the distance between schools. Teacher #3 indicated:

> Since the integration of WhatsApp in teaching and learning, the rate of plagiarism is too high. If one learner has written something for themselves, they share it with others, and you find that most of the learners in the class or even in the cluster wrote the same thing. Others think that teachers will not discover because of the distance between schools, but we normally discover that plagiarism happened during cluster moderations.

Teacher #6 further added that the integration of WhatsApp in learning promoted laziness among learners. He said:

> The use of WhatsApp in education encourages laziness among learners. You know, learners cannot research on their own to complete the project or the assignment; they just take a project researched by one learner and share it in a group where there are no teachers, or they share directly with each other through WhatsApp.

The assertions by Teacher #3 and Teacher #6 suggest that some learners used WhatsApp to engage in unacceptable academic practices such as plagiarism. Such practices appear to be undermining the good intentions of teachers and learners of integrating WhatsApp in business studies instruction. Although teachers did not indicate the actions taken against learners who plagiarised others' work, it is assumed that business studies teachers take actions against those learners to protect the integrity of assessments, while appreciating the affordances that come along with integrating WhatsApp in instructional practices.

WhatsApp Integration Strengthens the Relationship Between Teachers and Learners

During the interviews, the participants shared their views on the role of WhatsApp in promoting relationships among learners and among teachers and learners. It emerged that business studies teachers believed that WhatsApp integration helped them to create healthy relationship with the learners. The participants indicated that the WhatsApp integration made them understand learners even better.

Teacher #1 indicated that the integration of WhatsApp in her instruction boosted her relationship with learners and made her reach out to all learners individually. She stated:

> I think the integration of WhatsApp does help me to have a good relationship with the learners and

understand them individually because in class, you tend to communicate with only those who are talkative. On WhatsApp, those that are shy get a chance to talk to you and ask questions. That is where you give them the individual attention you cannot give them in the physical classroom.

Teacher #5 also agreed that the integration of WhatsApp boosted his relationship with the learners. He said:

The use of WhatsApp helps me to interact with the learners even after school hours and this builds the relationships between me and the learners. Whenever they have questions to ask, they post them on the group, and I can provide the necessary support.

Based on the teachers' statements, teachers agreed that WhatsApp allowed them to build healthy relationships with learners. This is because WhatsApp creates a platform for teachers to have sustained communication with learners as they support them to learn. WhatsApp also creates space for teachers and learners that is difficult to do in a face-to-face school environment because teachers mostly engage with learners during the business studies period that is limited to 60 minutes a day. Also, in most rural schools, teachers teach in overcrowded classrooms where it is difficult to provide individualised attention to different learners; the integration of WhatsApp allows them to support learners individually after hours.

Discussion of Findings
WhatsApp Integration Promotes Collaboration Among Learners
In this study I explored teachers' integration of WhatsApp in business studies instruction to promote collaborative learning. I found that the integration of WhatsApp in instructional practices promotes collaborative learning among learners. This finding confirms the results of the study by Mpungose (2020), which reveals that the integration of WhatsApp in instructional practices enabled learners to share ideas and experiences. Notably, business studies teachers who participated in the current study underscored that WhatsApp created a platform for business studies learners to engage with learners from different schools and this helped them to get different perspectives on the content that they learnt. This confirms the assertion by Daramola and Umoru (2021) that WhatsApp has the ability to create immediate connections among the learners from different locations and backgrounds. Furthermore, it is important to underscore that some teachers perceived the sharing of documents over WhatsApp as collaboration among the learners. Vera et al. (2020) caution that the simple sharing of documents electronically should not be construed as collaborative learning, because collaborative learning occurs when learners work together to solve problems, exchange ideas and complete tasks.

It also emerged from the study that the integration of WhatsApp to foster collaborative learning helped learners to develop skills to collaborate with peers. This finding corresponds with that of Brown et al. (2019) who found that WhatsApp promoted collaboration and communication skills that were vital to the success of both the employer and the employee in a work environment. Both collaboration and communication skills are pivotal for business studies learners to develop while at school for them to adjust to the 21st-century business environment. This is because the 21st-century business environment is characterised by complex problems that are best solved through collaboration with others. During the interviews, some teachers said that WhatsApp-based collaboration enhanced learners' abilities to collaborate and network with their peers and this is beneficial to them as future business practitioners. This is because in the 21st-century business environment, collaborating and networking with other people is crucial to accomplish different tasks. This is supported by Venter (2021) who emphasises that learners need to acquire collaboration skills for them to operate meaningfully in the 21st-century business environment that promotes teamwork.

WhatsApp Integration Improves Access to Educational Resources
I found that WhatsApp integration improves access to a variety of educational resources that enhance learners' learning. From the interviews it became clear that learners used WhatsApp to share learning materials from different sources, which helped them to enrich their understanding of business studies. La Hanisi et al. (2018) made similar findings in their study. They allude to the fact that the integration of WhatsApp allows learners to create a learning community where they interact with their peers and receive different support. Having access to different learning materials through WhatsApp is even more important for learners in rural-based schools since most of the schools in rural areas lack resources to supplement learning materials such as prescribed books that learners mainly depend on. It also emerged from the teachers' comments that WhatsApp-based instruction helped learners to engage in peer teaching during which learners asked questions about certain business studies concepts and received clarification from their peers. For some learners, peer teaching shaped their learning because their peers could explain certain concepts to them using their vernacular language which may improve their understanding of business studies content.

It also became clear that integrating WhatsApp in business studies teaching helped to extend instructional support beyond the four walls

of the class. The teachers stated that WhatsApp allowed them to provide individualised support to the learners to reinforce the content taught in class – even after hours. This finding concurs with the findings of a study by Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) that revealed that the integration of WhatsApp provided teachers with the opportunity to get to know learners better, both on the personal and educational level. For business studies learners, getting support from the teachers after hours is critical because some classes are overcrowded; it becomes difficult for learners to receive individual attention from the teacher during a lesson in an overcrowded classroom.

Despite the positive findings regarding WhatsApp integration in business studies presented above, the teachers also expressed some shortcomings of WhatsApp integration in their pedagogical practices. It became clear that some teachers believed that the integration of WhatsApp sometimes promoted plagiarism among some business studies learners. The teachers indicated that some learners used WhatsApp to share assignments among themselves and submit those assignments for grading. This finding is contrary to that of a study by Nsabayezu et al. (2020) in which they found that the integration of WhatsApp in education helped learners to construct their own knowledge in collaboration with their peers. Having some business studies learners engaging in unacceptable academic practices over WhatsApp can be expected in some South African schools because learners are not always cautioned about plagiarism that occurs online. The teaching in most South African schools is mainly face-to-face – learners are invigilated by the teachers when writing assessments to avoid plagiarism. Hence, for some learners, plagiarising through online platforms such as WhatsApp is not always perceived as a serious, unacceptable academic practice. In spite thereof, teachers should not be dissuaded from integrating WhatsApp to promote collaborative learning among business studies learners but should rather create awareness among learners about academic integrity when using both online and face-to-face instruction.

Theoretically, the findings from this study contribute to the body of knowledge on the social constructivism theory. For example, it became clear that the integration of WhatsApp promoted collaborative learning among learners. This is in line with social constructivists' beliefs that learners should learn from one another. Furthermore, the study indicates that the integration of WhatsApp in business studies provides a platform for learners to have easy access to their teachers' support for longer periods. Social constructivists believe that learners should receive guidance and feedback from knowledgeable individuals such as teachers during their learning. Finally, I found that the

integration of WhatsApp in business studies instruction provided a platform for learners to network, thus share ideas and experiences. This is in line with the principles of social constructivism, which suggests that learners should create knowledge together by sharing ideas and experiences.

Conclusion and Recommendations
In this study I explored the integration of WhatsApp by business studies teachers in their instructional practices to promote collaborative learning among learners. The evidence suggests that the integration of WhatsApp in teaching business studies promotes collaborative learning among learners. However, it appeared from the teachers' statements that learners used collaborative learning mainly online without it being applied in the classroom setting. Based on the findings, I, therefore, recommend that business studies teachers should ensure that educational resources used for WhatsApp-based instruction are incorporated in their classroom-based lessons. This would help all learners to have access to multiple educational resources and have the teacher clarifying some of the misunderstandings that may occur during WhatsApp-based instruction.

It should be noted that this was a small-scale study confined to one subject in six rural secondary schools in one district in KwaZulu-Natal. Thus, for future studies in this area, it is recommended that a study involving a bigger sample group should be conducted to explore how teachers used WhatsApp to promote collaborative learning in business studies or commerce subjects. Regarding the research approach, this study was purely qualitative, and I recommended that a quantitative study should be conducted in the future.

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