## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| ATP | Annual Teaching Plan |
| CAPS | Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement |
| CEDU | College of Education |
| CSI | Corporate Social Investment |
| DBE | Department of Basic Education |
| DG | Director General |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| DPGS | Division for postgraduates' studies |
| FET | Further Education and Training |
| FG | Focus Group |
| HOD | Head of Department |
| IEB | Independent Examination Board |
| KZN | Kwa Zulu-Natal |
| LDC | Less Developed Country |
| LO | Life Orientation |
| MEC | Member of Executive Council |
| NAPTOSA | National Professional Teachers' Organization of South Africa |
| NCS | National Curriculum Statement |
| NIHR | National Institute for Health Research |
| NP | Nationalist Party |
| NPPPPR | National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements |
| NS | Natural Sciences |

| | |
|---|---|
| NSC | National Senior Certificate |
| OBE | Outcomes-Based Education |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PBL | Problem-Based Learning |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| SA | South Africa |
| SADTU | South African Democratic Teachers' Union |
| SBA | School-Based Assessment |
| SDL | Self-Direct Learning |
| SGB | School Governing Body |
| SMT | School Management Team |
| SSIP | Secondary School Improvement Programme |
| TE | Teaching Experience |
| TS | Township Schools |
| UCD | University of California at Davis |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UMALUSI | The Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNISA | University of South Africa |
| US | Urban School |
| WIFI | Wireless Fidelity |

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# CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

America is experiencing a large numbers of learners with reading problems (Boyer & Burnette, 2008:1). Even in Sub-Saharan Africa, 774 million young people (over 15 years of age) and adults cannot read or write (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, 2013:1). Across Africa, the ministries of education are doing all they can to ensure that standards are progressively improved (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011:29). Business Tech (2015a:1) notes that South Africa's Mathematics and Science education is among the worst in the world – second last – according to global school rankings. A study undertaken by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) on Annual National Assessment (ANA) during 2012 on literacy levels among Grade 3 learners showed that 36% of children could not read or write at the appropriate level for their age (United Nations [UN], 2013:50). This is an indication that problems with South African education start at an early age.

I conducted the study in the context of key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools in Gauteng Ekurhuleni North District. I started teaching in 1998 in a private school and entered the public school system in 2009. Since then the South African curriculum has moved from Bantu Education to Curriculum 2005 (C2005), which was based on an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach, to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and now to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

As a teacher, my experience is that workshops were conducted when a new curriculum is introduced, but this was limited to two days. The agenda for the first day was the introduction of the new policy documents, and for the second day, the agenda addressed subject content. According to Johnson (2001:3), the one-shot approach is not effective, and the single day, or even two- or three-day training sessions are ineffective. An important question is whether the time allocated for the workshops is sufficient for the effective training of the teachers? If teachers are not competent and confident about the new curriculum, the desired results will not be achieved, and this could affect learner performance. Grade 12 results have also fluctuated with the changes in the curriculum. This study is thus positioned in the broader environment of the key curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa.

I also realised that the poor performance of Grade 12 learners can be attributed to curricula challenges. Teachers might not be equipped enough about implementation of a new curriculum in order to achieve the desired results. Every teacher must be geared towards the successful implementation of the new curriculum in order to improve learner performance. Literature review on learner performance agrees that there are many factors contributing to poor performance including teacher involvement in the curriculum development and design. Teachers are only involved in the implementation process. To bridge the gap teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience and are still teaching should be involved in the curriculum development and design. Teachers should therefore not be separated from the development and design.

The study findings aimed at identifying ways in which curriculum could be effectively developed, designed and implemented in order to improve Grade 12 learner performance. I noted that interventions are done in secondary schools, especially in Grade 12. The study is based on a principle that not only Grade 12 learner performance is important but that proper subject content foundation in primary school could yield better result in Grade 12. Commitment is required from all the stakeholders to prepare learners sufficiently from Foundation Phase. My experience as a secondary school teacher made me aware that learners from primary school do not have the required subject content foundation. I, therefore, identified that a need existed for such a study. The findings of this study could help to identify key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in South Africa and how curriculum theory can effectively guide curriculum implementation.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The South African government measures education performance by Grade 12 pass rate (Du Plooy, Henkeman & Nyoka, 2014:4). The South African Grade 12 pass rate has fluctuated as the curriculum changed from Bantu Education to the CAPS. Table 1.1 shows the progress made from Bantu Education with the improvement in the pass percentages. There were other educational systems prior to 1994 but my study will focus on Bantu Education. While the curriculum content has changed for the better, I believe that the government could focus more on improving learner performance than designing new curricula.

Table 1.1: Performance of Learners in South Africa on the National Grade 12 Examinations from 1994-2016 (Business Tech, 2015b:3; Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2016:2)

| Year | Curriculum | % Pass of Gr 12 |
|---|---|---|
| 1994 | Bantu Education | 58% |
| 2004 | Senior Certificate | 70.4% |
| 2008 | Curriculum 2005 (C2005) | 62.5% |
| 2013 | National Curriculum statement (NCS) | 78.2% |
| 2016 | Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) | 72.5% |

Table 1.1 shows a 12,4% increase in the pass rates from Bantu Education to the Senior Certificate in 2004. On 29 December 2005, the Gauteng Minister of Education, Ms Naledi Pandor, stated “It is unhelpful to compare an untransformed system in 1994 with the transformed system in 2005” (DBE, 2009:1). Nevertheless, I believe that it is helpful as it shows the progress that we have made with the CAPS. Angie Motshekga, the Minister of Education for the Department of Education (DoE), mentioned in her speech on the first Grade 12 awards in 2008, that “our OBE Grade 12s are beneficiaries of the fruits of democracy” (DBE, 2009:1).

However, in 2008, there were more than 3 070 schools that had a pass rate of below 60%, and 24 schools had a 0% pass rate (DoE, 2007:37). It is unacceptable to have more than 3 070 schools underperforming. It is even worse to have 24 schools with a 0% pass rate. If the Grade 12s of 2008 are indeed the beneficiaries of seeds planted more than ten years ago, why do we have 24 schools with a 0% pass rate which have not benefited at all from C2005? These schools should have been monitored within that period to avoid or to minimise the disastrous issue of underperforming schools.

Table 1.1 further shows a decline of 7,9% in the Grade 12 pass rate from 2004 to 2008. This may be the reason why C2005 was revised. The recommendations from the task team assigned by the Minister of education were that there was curriculum overload; there must be a clear description of the skills, knowledge, values and attitude needed to produce the kind of citizens that SA needs; curriculum design features must be reduced from eight to three critical and developmental outcomes, learning outcomes and assessment standards; curriculum and assessment need to be aligned in order to improve teacher orientation, training learning support and provincial support; and that time frames for implementation needed to be extended (DoE, 2002:5).

Table 1.1 also reflects that there was an increase of 15.7% in the Grade 12 pass rate from C2005 between 2008 and 2013. According to the DBE (2013a:202), this incremental improvement was due to the sustained inputs into basic education over several years. However, Spaull (2013:1) says the NCS examination results in 2013 are basically misleading because they do not take into account those learners who never make it to Grade 12 and the fact that more learners are opting for easier subjects like Mathematics Literacy instead of Mathematics. The 78.2% pass rate in 2013 is actually 40% when we look at the number of learners who wrote Grade 12 compared to the number that entered primary school in 2001 (Equal Education, 2015:2).

In 2014, the Grade 12 pass rate was 75,8% (DBE, 2014a:3). This was a decline of 2.4% in the Grade 12 pass rate from 2013 (NCS) to 2014 (CAPS). The decrease of 2,4% pass rate can be explained by the policy changes that were implemented in 2014, but the Minister of Education was of the opinion that it would produce positive outcomes in the medium term (DBE, 2014a:3). In 2014, out of 6 704 schools, 16 schools had a 0% pass rate (DBE, 2014a:4). Furthermore, 24 schools in Eastern Cape, five in KwaZulu-Natal and 16 schools in Limpopo achieved below 40% over a period of five years (DBE, 2014a:12). In 2016, the Grade 12 pass rate dropped again to 72.5%, which is expected to increase because it is the third group to write the CAPS examinations since the CAPS was implemented in 2014 for the Senior and FET phases.

One might argue that a 70% pass rate is a good percentage but, when we take into consideration the promotion requirements of FET phase, they are very low because learners are allowed to pass with 30% in a subject. It seems the focus is on the number of learners passing not the quality of the pass rates. According to the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the NCS Grade R-12 (NPPPPR), learners will be promoted if they achieve 40% in three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home Language level and 30% in the three other subjects (DBE, 2011a:21). However, the admission requirement to a Bachelor's Degree is a NSC with an achievement of (50-59%) in four recognised, 20-credit subjects (DBE, 2015a:16). The learners cannot go to university with the promotion requirements of the DBE. This is an indication that the focus is on pushing more learners out of the school system. Spaull (2013:39) believes that the focus on Grade 12 results is short-sighted because South African learners experience learning problems early on their schooling and this is the main cause of underperformance in later years.

Against this background, the following section presents the theoretical framework of the study.

## 1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section describes the theoretical framework that was employed to investigate curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools. A theoretical framework provides you with a guide to organize literature (Kumar, 2011:52). It may be used to provide understanding about what is going on (Richards & Morse, 2013:249). It helps the researcher to develop and explore ideas about how the world operates (Walliman, 2011:66). A useful theory gives you new insights and broadens your understanding of that phenomenon (Maxwell, 2008:14). The value of including a theoretical perspective is that it contributes to an in-depth description of how Grade 12 learner performance can be described in terms of curriculum challenges. Matthews and Ross (2010:22) add that it helps us to work out a response to a problem. It can also increase the efficiency of the existing theory (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010:42).

For the purpose of this study, curriculum theory was the most appropriate theoretical framework. Curriculum theory applies to what is taught in any educational institution and relates to whether it provides the learners with resources for appropriate performance (Paulo, 2014:4). Freire's theory, critical theory as well as Tyler's theory, were applied to guide this study. Freire states that education is a collective activity between participants (Rugut & Osman, 2013:23). In addition, critical theory asserts that active and critical learning are encouraged (DBE, 2011b:4). Tyler (1949:65) states that for objectives to be attained there must be interaction between the learner and the external environment. Therefore, all the stakeholders must be considered when designing a new curriculum. If all the stakeholders collaborate, the desired results will be achieved. These theories are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

In this study, I wanted to understand how curriculum theory can effectively guide curriculum implementers to overcome poor learner performance. To explore this question, I asked all the participants questions which were based on theory, literature review, research and my experience as a teacher in order to identify the curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance.

To clarify important aspects, the key concepts used in this study are discussed in the next section.

## 1.4 KEY CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this research, clarification of key terms is given.

### 1.4.1 Curriculum

Curriculum entails what the teachers are going to teach and what the learners are going to learn and how will they learn (Su, 2012:153). For the purpose of this study, curriculum focuses on the secondary school.

### 1.4.2 Curriculum Change

Curriculum change is a process of using resources effectively in order to improve curriculum (Yasmin, Rafiq & Ashraf, 2013:1). For the purpose of this study, curriculum change means moving from Bantu Education, to C2005 which was based on OBE, to the NCS and now to CAPS.

### 1.4.3 Curriculum Factors

According to Su (2012:155), curriculum factors include goals and objectives, content, teaching and learning methods, assessment and learning environment. In this study, it is crucial to identify which curriculum factors affect Grade 12 learner performance.

### 1.4.4 Grade 12 Learner

Learner means any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of this Act (The Presidency, 2011:2). In this study, a learner is any person in Grade 12 whose responsibility is to receive formal education.

### 1.4.5 Learner Performance

Learner performance means measuring the amount of academic content a learner learns in a determined amount of time (Carter, 2010:1). For the purpose of this study, learner performance is measured according to the promotion requirements for Grades 10-12 stipulated in the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the NCS Grade R-12 (NPPPR) (DBE, 2011a:21).

## 1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Countries worldwide have experienced changes to their curriculum and this has had an intense impact on the way in which it has been conceptualised and implemented (Horsthemke, Siyakwazi, Walton & Wolhuter, 2013:3). In South Africa, the change of curriculum was a response to the 21st century demands of higher level skills and knowledge (UN, 2013:11).

### 1.5.1 Main Question

According to Jurs and Wiersma (2008:82), the goal of research is to collect information that will answer a postulated research problem. In this regard, the main research question of this study was:

What are the key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools?

### 1.5.2 Sub-Questions

In the light of the main question, the sub-questions posed below serve as key foci for the research study:

- How can curriculum theory effectively guide curriculum implementers?
- What are the key curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa?
- What are the effects of curriculum change?
- How do teachers perceive the CAPS in South Africa?
- What are teachers' experiences regarding the CAPS?

## 1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

In view of the problem statement, the aim of this study was to identify the key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools.

The objectives of the research were to:

- Determine how curriculum theory can effectively guide curriculum implementers;
- Determine the key curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa;
- Identify the effects of curriculum change;
- Investigate how teachers perceive the CAPS in South Africa;
- Explore teacher's experiences regarding the CAPS.

The following section discusses the research methodology.

## 1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology is a way in which research problems are solved systematically (Rajasekar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi, 2013:5). It provides the norm for organizing, planning, designing and conducting research (Mohajan, 2017:1).

### 1.7.1 Research Design

Research design is the overall process within which the research is conducted which constitutes for measurement (Mohajan, 2017:7). The next sections discussed the research paradigm, research approach, and research type.

#### 1.7.1.1 Interpretive Research Paradigm

Interpretivism focuses on human interpretation of the social world and the significance of both participants and the researcher's interpretation and understaning phenomenon being studied (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013:11). Interpretivism was regarded as the most appropriate paradigm for this study because it is concerned with revealing multiple realities as opposed to searching for one objective reality (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:6). This study not only focuses on urban schools but township schools as well to understand these multiple realities. Matthews and Ross (2010:28) add that interpretivism helps with the interpretation of meaning within a specific context. It means to look at a situation from the participants' perspective (Tracy, 2013:40). Meaning does not exist independently of the human experience of a phenomenon (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011:17). I did not only interviewed Heads of Departments (HODs) individually but also conducted focus groups with teachers in order to explore the challenges they face when implementing a new curriculum. This allowed for different perspectives on the research questions.

#### 1.7.1.2 Research Approach

What exactly the researcher is trying to find out will lead him to either qualitative or quantitative research (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010:67). Qualitative research is used to research the history of, trends in and theories about a topic (Graustein, 2014:37) while Richards and Morse (2013:5) add that it provides researchers with tools to resolve confusion. In order to understand the key curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa, a qualitative research approach was employed as the best option for the collection of relevant data. A qualitative approach was chosen because it involves the use of multiple data collection methods such as case study, personal experience, life stories, interviews and observations that describe individual's daily experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:21).

Since it was relevant to this study to gain an in-depth understanding of the HODs' and teachers' perceptions and their experiences regarding curriculum challenges, the use of more than one interpretive practice was required.

#### 1.7.1.3 Research Type

This study identified with a multiple case study because it is designed to allow the researcher to develop an in-depth analysis of a case (Creswell, 2014:14). Its goal is to present enough evidence to gain the reader's confidence that the researcher knows his/her subject and has attended to the validity of the evidence (Yin, 2009:17). Kumar, (2011:123) states that case study is very useful when exploring an area where you want to have a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Along this line, I chose three urban schools and three township schools (each school was regarded as a case) in order to understand the dynamics of different types of schools and to present evidence to ensure the validity of the results. Yin (2010, as cited in Vohra, 2014:55) emphasises that multiple cases strengthen the results by replicating the patterns, thereby increasing the robustness of the findings.

### 1.7.2 Research Methods

Research methods are all measures used for conducting research (Rajasekar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi, 2013:5). The selection of participants and the methods to collect and analyse data are discussed in the next sections.

#### 1.7.2.1 Selection of Participants

Selection of participants means choosing participants who can provide an acceptable compromise between cost and representativeness (Stopher, 2012:65). Purposeful selection was found to be appropriate for this study. This means that the researcher purposefully chooses participants who fit the parameters of the research project, research questions and research purpose (Tracy, 2013:134). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:112) state that the researcher can select participants geographically and test all participants selected. In the Ekurhuleni North District, there are 78 schools, which are divided into six clusters. I selected District 6 because the schools in this district were accessible and geographically convenient to me which made the study cost-effective. I visited three urban and three township schools in Cluster 1. I conducted individual interviews with two HODs from each school (12 in total) and interviewed five to seven teachers in a focus group at each school; i.e., six focus group interviews were conducted in total (36 participants). Participants had ten or more years of

teaching experience, which meant they had experienced at least three curriculum changes since 2008.

1.7.2.2 Data Collection

The data collection processes and the specific data collection instruments that were used in this study were in-depth individual interviews and focus group interviews.

i) In-depth Open-Ended Individual Interviews

Interviewing is a very useful technique which involves questioning or discussing issues with people which would likely not be accessible using techniques such as observation or questionnaires (Blaxter, et al., 2010:93). However, a rigidly predetermined schedule was not used which allows for a more flexible approach during the interview so that the interviewer can deviate from the interview schedule to possibly explore issues that may lead to deeper understanding. The researcher has complete freedom in terms of what questions to ask and what wording to use (Kumar, 2011:338). Specifically, this study used one-on-one open-ended interviews to allow interviewees the freedom to elaborate as they saw fit. I conducted individual interviews with 12 HODs (two per school) because they are the curriculum implementers and monitors. In order to get the best out of open-ended interviews; they are usually audio-recorded and then transcribed for later review. Therefore, all interviews were recorded for this study.

ii) Focus Group Interviews

A focus group interview is a small group discussion that is used to obtain a better understanding of a problem (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:363). In these discussions, the participants got an opportunity to share their perceptions, point of views, experiences and wishes without forcing a consensus. I used focus group interviews for collecting data from the teachers in different disciplines on curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance. The purpose of focus group interview is to explore attitudes, perceptions towards an issue through a free and open discussion (Kumar, 2011:124). My main aim with the focus group interview was to hold productive discussions with the teachers in order to capture as much data as possible about their perceptions and experiences regarding the curriculum challenges. I visited the schools before data collection began to make appointments and arrangements with the teachers for the focus group interviews and to explain the purpose of the research to all participants, familiarising them with the topic and outlining possible benefits that would accrue from the study.

iii) Pilot Study

A pilot study is used to investigate the possibility of undertaking the study on a larger scale and to streamline methods and procedures for the main study (Kumar, 2011:336). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:237) state that it is important to pilot test the interview guide before conducting the study. A pilot study was done in this study to ensure that the instruments matched the research objectives and would be able to produce the desired results. The pilot study was implemented in settings similar to those where the empirical research was carried out. Piloting gave me an idea of the pattern of responses that were likely to occur. First, the instrument was reviewed by three district facilitators to check for relevance and clarity. The facilitators were asked to comment on the length, clarity and content of the interview guide. Following their comments and suggestions, the interview guide was revised. It was then tried out in interviews with two HODs and a focus group of five teachers chosen from my school which was not sampled in this study.

1.7.2.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis include gathering, ordering, labeling, printing and sometimes reformatting the data (Tracy, 2013:205). Topics were broken down into their components parts which fit together. Qualitative data analysis involves coding the data, dividing the text into small units, assigning a code to each unit and then grouping the codes into themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:208). Coding is a process by which items are assigned meaningful codes (Blaxter, et al., 2010:221). Once the data had been condensed into manageable chunks, main themes were established, recurring responses were identified, then concepts and categories were developed (Dolowitz, Buckler & Sweeney, 2008:50). In this study, data analysis started as soon as data collection began and it was an ongoing process. Interview questions were continually modified and refined during the intervention. Audio-recordings from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Measures for trustworthiness of data are explained and ethical considerations are discussed next.

## 1.8 MEASURES FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

Guba (1981, as cited in Hill, 2012:175) states that qualitative researchers should use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to evaluate trustworthiness.

### 1.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to establishing whether the results of the research are believable from the perspective of the participant (Kumar, 2011:172). To achieve credibility, the researcher talked less and listened more to allow the respondents to express themselves fully. I also kept audio-recordings of the interviews. I prepared a list of interview and focus group questions based on theory and literature to answer the research questions.

### 1.8.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a qualitative research can be generalised to other contextual settings (Kumar, 2011:349). I explained the research steps in detail to make sure that the reader understands how the study was conducted in the event that someone else might want to do a similar study in another context.

### 1.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the same results would be obtained if the same thing could be observed twice (Kumar, 2011:333). Data integrity was ensured by keeping two or more copies of the same data in a storage device (Sivathanu, Wright & Zadok, 2005:1). I stored my data in a laptop, used an encrypted password system. Hard copies were locked in a filing cabinet for which there was only one key.

### 1.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed by others (Kumar, 2011:332). I collected the data from HODs and teachers in order to get different perspectives on the challenges they experienced in implementing new curricula. During the interviews, I tried to remain as unbiased as possible to avoid contaminating data with my own ideas, perceptions and previous knowledge on the subject. In the same way, the ethical considerations explained next were attended to.

## 1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Blaxter, et al. (2010:161), ensuring that research is ethically appropriate is a significant aspect of the conduct of sound research. The researcher must be knowledgeable about ethical principles before conducting research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:122). UNISA (2007:9) asserts that research should make a positive contribution towards the welfare of people; research should not cause harm to the research participants; and the researcher should respect the autonomy, rights and dignity of research participants. I

applied to the College of Education's ethics committee to request ethical clearance (Appendix A). A letter requesting permission to conduct research was sent to the Gauteng DBE head office in Johannesburg accompanied by research ethics clearance certificate from UNISA. Permission was also requested from the HODs (Appendix D) and teachers (Appendix F). All research participants were informed in advance about the intended empirical study. They were also informed about the content of the questions posed, the fact that the interviews would be recorded, that the information they provided would be treated as confidential, and that their responses would remain anonymous.

## 1.10 CHAPTERS DIVISION

The research report comprises the following chapters, which also indicates the research programme that was followed:

Chapter 1 outlines the introduction and brief historical overview of the background for the study. The theoretical framework, key concepts, problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research methodology and chapter division are also stated.

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to provide the contextual framework of the study. A historical overview of the learner performance internationally is presented. statistical scenario of learner performance, factors contributing to poor learner performance, dropout rates and underperforming schools are discussed. Effectiveness of promotion requirements and manipulation of results are analysed. Strategies to improve learner performance internationally and in South Africa are also discussed. Curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa and factors involved in curriculum transformation are also presented.

In Chapter 3 the theoretical framework of the study is presented. It also identifies how curriculum theory can effectively guide curriculum implementation. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Freire's idea of curriculum theory, critical theory as well as Tyler's theory. Also from Chapter 3, the literature study provides the conceptual framework covering concepts like curriculum, curriculum factors and curriculum change.

In Chapter 4, the research design and methods used in the research process are discussed in detail. The selection of participants, data collection procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations are explained.

Chapter 5 provides an in-depth analysis of the results. Some of the theory and literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 is integrated into the findings of the study to confirm or refute the existing perspectives. The interpretation of the results is also reported here.

Chapter 6 provides the conclusion to this study. This chapter aims to answer the main research question and the supportive research questions. The implications of the theoretical and empirical research are summarised. Based on the theoretical and empirical research, solutions to the challenges faced by curriculum implementers are provided. To address the main question, key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance are described. The limitations of the study are stated and recommendations for further research are made.

## 1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This introductory chapter outlined the background of the study. The background placed the study in the South African context. Grade 12 learner performance is a problem in South Africa because more learners are passing with 30%. Learners experience problems in the Foundation phase and move to the FET phase when the damage has already been done. I noted that the curriculum changed three times in a period of 10 years which might affect teachers' ability to implement the curriculum.

The next chapter presents the literature review, including the contextual framework of the study.

# CHAPTER 2: LEARNER PERFORMANCE AND CURRICULUM CHALLENGES: A CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention of this study was to identify key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance. Chapter 1 outlined the orientation to this study.

This chapter provides a review of related literature and provides the contextual framework of the study. Historical overview of the learner performance, dropout rates and underperformance of schools are discussed. Promotion requirements and manipulation of results are investigated. Strategies to improve learner performance are also suggested. Furthermore, curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa are presented.

Since learner performance affect all the countries, a brief international overview of learner performance follows.

## 2.2 AN INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Education is considered extremely important throughout the world, but it still remains that not every country does it the same and indeed some countries are better at it than others (MBC Times, 2009:1). In a recent comparison of academic performance in 57 countries, learners in Finland came out on top overall (Wilde, 2015:1). Finland has continued to perform well and is therefore regarded as an example of an excellent school system (Ryan, 2013:5). In Finland, they only take the top 10% of college graduates to enter the teaching profession (US DoE, 2011:1). Teachers in Finland have assistants who have been trained to assist struggling learners (Hendrickson, 2015:37). During the last three years of high school, learners are separated into academic and vocational tracks, and if learners need extra help, intensive intervention is provided (Wilde, 2015:2).

England has an estimated 24 000 incompetent teachers, that is one in every school, and it was found that learners taught by incompetent teachers can drop more than a grade in any subject than those taught by competent teachers (Shepherd, 2008:1). Nkadi (2015:119) asserts that teaching experience and appropriate teacher qualifications help to improve learner performance. One percent (1%) of teachers in England are Advanced Skills Teachers meaning that they produce excellent outcomes with learners; they possess excellent subject knowledge and are able to advise on the best practices; they possess the

ability to plan both operationally and strategically to ensure successful learning, they possess excellent ability to assess and evaluate; and lastly, they advise and support other teachers, including coaching and training both in their own schools and in other settings (Brighouse & Woods, 2013:4). This is an indication 99% of teachers are not skilled enough to produce skilled learners. This is a serious concern since teachers are the drivers of curriculum and could play a major role in improving learner performance. Learners need knowledgeable, skillful teachers trained in effective strategies to teach academic knowledge and skills in order to improve their performance (Maimuna, 2016:4). In order to ensure better understanding and performance, teachers should make use of recent and relevant teaching materials in the teaching and learning process (Ige, 2016:79).

Since 2006, the education system of the United Kingdom (UK) which always had one of the best education systems, is at risk and is ranked 25th for reading, 28th for Mathematics and 16th for Science (Shepherd, 2010:3). Learners in the UK struggle to perform Mathematics tasks with higher cognitive demands such as taking real world situations and translating and interpreting them into mathematical terms (OECD, 2012:1). Research conducted in the UK reveals that better teachers lead to better performance and better performance leads to higher learner motivation (British Council, 2015:1). Most learners in Scotland achieve an average of 70% in numeracy although, in secondary schools, only about 40% achieve high standards. However, in reading, both primary and secondary learners perform at high standards of around 80% (OECD, 2015:63).

The United States of America (USA) is struggling with Mathematics because it ranks 26th out of the 34 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (Ryan, 2013:3). Among the 34 OECD countries, it performed below average in 2012 in Mathematics and around average in reading (OECD, 2012:1). In a 2010 report only 6% of USA learners were found to be performing at the advanced level in Mathematics, much lower than those attained by 30 other countries (Hanushek, Peterson & Woessmann, 2012:1). Again in 2015, USA's learner performance in PISA scored average in reading and below average in Mathematics (OECD, 2017:1). Studies show that a teacher's level of literacy in the USA affects learners' performance more than any other measurable teacher attribute (McKinsey, 2007:16).

Zimbabwe has the highest literacy rate in Africa. From 2009 to 2016 learners' performance has been very low and unacceptable, ranging between 19% and 29% (Nyoni, Nyoni & Bonga (2017:3). The ratio of qualified teachers is 42:1 for primary schools and 31:1 for secondary schools (Higherlife Foundation, 2016:2). The low academic performance among the Grade

12 learners in Namibia has become so stressful and frustrating to all the stakeholders (Maemeko & Nkengbeza, 2017:96). Research conducted in Namibia reveals that teachers who are qualified and have more years of experience are able to impact learners more than teachers with fewer years of experience (Owalabi, 2012:75). Experienced teachers are able to get through to the learners easily because they know different approaches. Teachers are important tools in improving learner performance. It is, therefore, imperative that they are skilled. Learner performance seems to be a challenge around the world, which is an indication that proper teacher training needs to be a priority because teachers are the curriculum drivers and if they are skilled, they will be able to improve the results.

## 2.3 LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa was identified as one of the worst performing countries in the field of education by the World Economic Forum Report (Du Plooy, Henkeman & Nyoka, 2014:2). South Africa ranks 10th out of 15 African countries for Grade 6 reading and eighth for Mathematics, even when compared with low income countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, even though South Africa has fewer pupils per teacher, better resources and more qualified teachers than those countries (Jacobsohn, 2017:1). This is an indication that most learners acquire learning deficits early on primary school and then carry these with them as they move through the higher levels (Spaull, 2017:1). It is my assumption that poor performance in the lower grades may have an influence on Grade 12 learner performance.

The context of learner performance in South Africa, the statistics of learner performance in South Africa and factors contributing to poor learner performance are discussed in the next section.

### 2.3.1 The statistical scenario of learner performance in South Africa

Africa Check (2014:3) states that the Grade 12 results are not a good measure of a successful curriculum because the results only account for about half of those who entered school in Grade 1. The pass rate is an indication that the curriculum is moving in the right direction or not. It is an indication of how many learners gain access to tertiary education and what the gap between the best and worst performing schools is (Davis, 2017:3). Table 2.1 presents Grade 12 performance from 2012 to 2017.

Table 2.1: Grade 12 Pass Rate from 2012-2017 (DBE, 2015a:43; 2016a:2; 2017d:23)

| YEAR | NO. OF LEARNERS WROTE | % PASS |
|---|---|---|
| 2012 | 511 152 | 73,9% |
| 2013 | 562 112 | 78,2% |
| 2014 | 532 860 | 75,8% |
| 2015 | 644 536 | 70,7% |
| 2016 | 674 652 | 72,5% |
| 2017 | 651 707 | 75,1 |

From Table 2.1, one would say that 70% is a good pass rate because only 30% have not achieved. However, many learners disappeared from the system between Grade 10 and Grade 12 in the two top provinces namely, Northwest and Free State, and their disappearance is one of the reasons for the increased pass rate of 78.2% in 2013 (News24, 2014:1). In 2017, three provinces that had higher pass rates compared to 2016 (Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Kwazulu Natal) also had the largest decline in the number Grade 12s writing matric (Spaull, 2018:2). Furthermore, approximately only 23% of Grade 12s in South Africa would probably have passed had they been forced to score 50% for each subject (News24, 2014:1). This is an indication that out of 70% pass rate, 47% consists of quantity passes and 23% will be able to further their studies at universities.

The pass rate of 75.8% in 2014 is actually 58.7% if it is calculated using the number who registered and not the number who wrote (Vermeulen, 2015:1). Spaull (2015:2) shares the same sentiments, but he used Grade 2 figures because there is excess grade repetition in Grade 1. He adds that the real matric pass rate would be about 36% for 2014, down from 40% in 2013 (ibid.). Lovemore (2015:1) adds that the real pass rate measured as a percentage of learners who started Grade 10 in 2012 and achieved the NSC in 2014 was just 37.9%. Equal Education (2015:5) argues that the 2014 pass rate is misleading because up to 50% of the learners drop out of school before they reach Grade 12. Any pass percentage calculated from the number of learners who wrote Grade 12 at the end of the year would, therefore, be inaccurate and inflated (Vermeulen, 2015:1).

Even in 2016, the true Grade 12 pass rate would only be 40.2%, not 72.5%, if poor performing learners who were removed from the system were accounted for (Davis, 2017:3). Business Tech (2017:2) adds that 40.2% is correct since the dropout rate is also not taken

into consideration. In Grade 10 in 2014, there were 1,1 million learners, and in Grade 12 in 2016, there were 610 000; the dropout rate is thus 44.6%. The pass rate increased from 72,5% in 2016 to 75,1% in 2017. However, Spaull (2018:2) argues that the real pass rate is closer to 55%, not 75%, because the throughput rate is calculated by dividing the total number of passes by the Grade 10 enrolment two years earlier or by the Grade 2 enrolment 10 years earlier. This could mean that the DBE's focus is based on Grade 12 only and many learners are lost throughout the system. It is imperative to keep track of learners from Grade R in order to improve the quality passes.

### 2.3.2 Factors contributing to poor learner performance

The type of school leadership by the principal, teacher-pupil ratio qualified and dedicated teachers, classrooms and learner performance are the points at which effectiveness of a curriculum can be measured (Nyoni, Nyoni & Bonga, 2017:1). South African schools are characterised by a lack of adequate school buildings, insufficient classrooms, poor or non-existent sanitation, a lack of clean water, insufficient instructional material such as textbooks as well as weak leadership (Legotlo, 2014:1). In schools that cannot afford more teachers or that are unable to increase the number of classrooms, classes are sometimes overcrowded to the point that children learn under trees and teachers have to spend more time on classroom management than on teaching, which can result in poor learner performance (Higherlife Foundation, 2016:3). Learners' performance does not occur in isolation to other factors therefore it is important to consider learners' socio –economic issues (OECD, 2017:70). Quality teaching in the classroom, better management, more information to stakeholders and greater accountability are needed (Jacobsohn, 2017:1). Without a principal who manages by ensuring that teachers and learners arrive at school on time, learner performance is limited (ibid.). The factors contributing to poor learner performance for this study are discussed next.

#### 2.3.2.1 Medium of Instruction

One of the challenges of the CAPS is language as a barrier to the learners (Mbatha, 2016:1). According to the White Paper on Special Needs Education, this barrier to learning for learners arises from different aspects of the curriculum such as medium of instruction (DoE, 2001:19). English is regarded as a medium of instruction for majority of South African schools. A study conducted by Howie (2013:1) revealed that learners' proficiency in English was a strong predictor of their performance. In South Africa, the majority of rural and township schools are doing English as a Second Language and ex-Model C schools are

doing English as First Additional Language. However, that is not taken into consideration when setting national question papers. Most schools are doing English First Language with Second Language learners, and this impacts negatively on other subjects (News24, 2015:2). English is mainly the language used in other subjects; therefore, extra tuition is needed for second language speakers (Mji & Makgato, 2006:263).

A poor foundation in English creates a challenging learning environment (Gbayange, 2014:3). If learners can firmly grasp English at an early age, it increases their academic performance (Nyandwi, 2014:27). In addition, if learners have good effective communication skills and good competency in English, learner performance will improve (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012:22). Learners perform poorly because of their lack of English competence which limits their chances of going on to tertiary education (Nyandwi, 2014:36). Grade 12 learners are struggling to communicate in English, and that is a disadvantage because English is the language they need to use to respond to questions in the examination (Rammala, 2009:21).

When learners learn in a language that is not their mother tongue, they are not always able to interpret a question correctly in the examination. As a result, the chance of providing the correct answer is limited (Dhurumraj, 2013:60). Learners who interact using English tend to understand it better and do well in the examination (Reche, Bundi, Riungu & Mbugua, 2012:131). In rural and township schools, although the medium of instruction is English, learners spend most of the time speaking in the vernacular. As a result, learners do not participate in class because they cannot express themselves in English. Research conducted in Namibia also identified English as a medium of instruction as a factor contributing to poor learner performance (Nkadi, 2015:119). Learners will not be able to perform well in other subjects if their English is poor (Arsad, Buniyamin & Manan, 2014:44). For learners to perform well, they should have mastered reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as being competent using the language (Mosha, 2014:75).

#### 2.3.2.2 Lack of Qualified Teachers

Teachers are the main resources in the learning process, and learner performance is determined partly by the qualification and motivation of teachers (Department for International Development, 2011:1). Most teachers around the world know only a little about their subject matter (UN, 2013:42). Sufficient, qualified teachers would improve learner performance (OECD, 2012:6). All schools should have access to the same resources, including qualified teachers teaching subjects they are qualified to teach (UN, 2013:77). However, most schools in Limpopo, for example, do not have sufficient teachers and

teachers are overburdened because the province continues to cut the number of posts in schools. As a result, Limpopo learners will continue to perform poorly in Grade 12 and all other grades (South African Democratic Teachers' Union [SADTU] Limpopo Secretariat, 2016:1). Performance depends to a large extent on the number of teachers, their quality, their devotion to duty and their effectiveness on the job (Ahmad, 2016:78). If these challenges are not addressed, this will affect the type of skilled learners who will be produced, and the economic growth of the country will be negatively affected (Murava, 2017:4).

Teachers must know that their work as their standards, their preparation, their effort and their initiatives in the classroom all shape the education of the learners (Babbage, 2013:7). Teachers must always be prepared for lessons, must make lessons interesting and must motivate the learners. In order for teachers to be successful in fulfilling their duties, they need relevant materials, continuous professional development and support from the principal and teacher support groups to share their concerns and discuss successes and failures (Wan & Gut, 2011:62). It is imperative that all teachers should have knowledge of the subject content, and more importantly, know how to teach (Mola, 2016:2). Teachers need to take pride in their profession and follow basic concepts such as teaching reading, writing and arithmetic (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013:41). If teachers can transition their practices to focus on lifelong learning, learners will be prepared for the real world (Wan & Gut, 2011:8). The DBE should continuously empower teachers in order to avoid a continuous decline in learner performance (Baloyi, 2008:1). Nevertheless, subject knowledge alone will not be enough to ensure effective teaching and learning and to improve learner performance if resources are not available.

#### 2.3.2.3 Lack of Resources

Rural schools generally have poorer resources compared to their urban counterparts (UN, 2013:61). The Eastern Cape remains the worst performing province with a 63.3% pass rate in 2016, which has been attributed to poor school infrastructure and a lack of materials and resources (Jacobsohn, 2017:1). A study conducted by Rammala (2009:23) revealed that there is a strong relationship between learner performance and the quality of the facilities available to learners. A lack of resources affects the effectiveness of a teacher's lessons (Reche, Bundi, Riungu & Mbugua, 2012:129). The resources available to enhance the learning process are a vital factor that impacts on the learner's ability to learn (Department for International Development, 2011:1). By the time they are in Grade 3, learners who are in schools that lack resources tend to be years behind learners in well-resourced schools

(Equal Education, 2015:1). In South Africa, there are two types of schools: ex-Model-C schools which are well-resourced, and rural or township schools which are under-resourced. As far back as 2001, the Department of Education (2001:19) identified a lack of materials and equipment needed in schools as a barrier to learning.

To improve learner performance, the challenges presented by two types of schools must first be addressed. Epri (2016:98) asserts that learners are handicapped if they attend schools with insufficient learning materials. Teachers from these schools have low performance expectations from the learners and when learners realise that, they perform poorly (Ali, Haider, Munir, Khan & Ahmed, 2013:1). Adequate resources enhance academic performance (Jacobsohn, 2017:1). Schools which are well-resourced normally maintain high academic performance (Nyandwi, 2014:31). Under-resource centres, as well as computer and science laboratories, are challenges in the implementation of the CAPS. (Murava, 2017:1). Most public schools in South Africa lack proper laboratory facilities making learning difficult (Dhurumraj, 2013:21). Nyandwi (2014:32) further states that, to keep learners interested in a subject involving laboratory work, resources are needed to transfer knowledge and facts to learners to enable them to perform well in the examinations. The success of theoretical and practical lessons depends on the availability of resources (Dhurumraj, 2013:21). However, if we have qualified teachers and well-resourced schools but insufficient time allocated to complete the syllabus, learner performance will still be a challenge.

#### 2.3.2.4 Time Allocated to Complete the Syllabus

Time allocated for teaching and learning is one of the factors influencing learner performance (Reche, et al., 2012:12). The weekly instructional time for Foundation Phase Grade R-2 is 23 hours; for Grade 3, it is 25 hours; for Intermediate Phase Grade 4-6, Senior Phase Grade 7-9 and FET phase Grade 10-12 it is 27,5 hours (DBE, 2013c:25). The task team sent by the Minister of Education suggested that more teaching time should be allocated in the lower grades (Parliamentary Monitoring Group [PMG], 2009:1). Barriers to learning are associated with the pace of teaching and the time available to complete the syllabus (DoE, 2001:19). Each subject has an Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) which guides the teacher on the time allocated for each topic. According to my experience, especially in Accounting, the time allocated to complete certain concepts is insufficient.

There are slow learners, average and fast learners in a class but the time allocated to complete the syllabus does not cater for slow learners. Teachers are forced to neglect the

slow learners in order to ensure that they are up-to-date with the prescribed time allocated for each subject (Epri, 2016:97). The content for the CAPS curriculum is very dense and the periods are too short for the pace of the learners which results in a high failure rate (Du Plessis & Marais, 2015:8). The syllabus is overloaded, and slow learners make it difficult to complete the syllabus on time (Sundai & Sheriff, 2015:1052). Non-completion of the syllabus is associated with poor performance (Mji & Makgato, 2006:262).

According to the DBE (2015f:3), the purpose of assessment is to ensure that the curriculum as stated in the CAPS document across all subjects is covered to ensure that teachers cannot "teach to the paper". This is basically what teachers are doing because they teach concepts that they are certain will be asked, or if they are preparing for the School-Based Assessment (SBA) task, they teach exactly towards what is covered in the task. However, the CAPS syllabus provides for progression from grade to grade. Therefore, if a syllabus is not thoroughly covered, the learners' understanding will be limited in the next grade and this will affect their performance. The ATP does not take examination time into consideration as teachers are expected to teach up to a certain time and, by then, the learners are not coming to school because they have already started with their examinations. This forces the teacher to rush through the syllabus which leads to learners having a poor subject content foundation.

#### 2.3.2.1 Poor Subject Content Foundation

Grade 12 begins in Grade R and 1, but if learners have a poor subject content foundation by the end of Grade 3, the chances of their achieving a good Grade 12 pass is unlikely (Jacobsohn, 2017:1). "National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) president, Dr Anthea Ceresto, stated that 'if you progress a learner in Grade 1 to Grade 2 who has no language ability, research suggests that more than half of our children in Grade 3 can't read or write in any language, not even their mother tongue'" (Hlophe, 2016:1). Spaull (2018:2) states that "78% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning in any language, 66% of our Grade 9s can't do basic Mathematics and 79% of our Grade 6 Mathematics teachers can't pass a Grade 6 Mathematics test". This is an indication that the system is not producing strong learners who will perform well when they get to FET and university. Therefore, the system is ineffective and inefficient (UN, 2013:61) despite the fact that the primary purpose of the NSC is to equip learners with skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that will enable them to participate meaningfully in society (DBE, 2011b:9). Lower grade teachers should cover the whole curriculum on time, and carry out regular and quality assessments in the lower grades (Mola, 2016:1).

Learners' problems in primary schools are usually carried over to secondary school, and ultimately to higher education institutions as many learners struggle to cope academically at tertiary institutions (Bharuthram, 2012:1). If learners do not perform well in lower grades, it affects their understanding of the subject in the FET phase (Sundai & Sheriff, 2015:1052). Learners in Grades 10 and 11 drop out and even repeat because they did not acquire the foundational skills in earlier grades (UN, 2013:61). Mola (2016:1) suggests that baseline assessment in Grade 9 should be conducted to assess whether the learners lack basic knowledge to enter the FET phase. It should be noted that National Senior Certificate is a three-year qualification covering Grades 10, 11 and 12 (UN, 2013:61). Our curriculum does not develop the learners' cognitive and higher-order thinking skills to grasp the content at tertiary level. As a result, many of them drop out in their first year at university (Mola, 2016:1). This may be because of the introduction of the progression policy which allows learners to move from one grade to the next irrespective of whether they have the required subject content foundation and skills to be on that grade.

2.3.2.6 Progression of Learners

Learners are pushed through the system until Grade 11; then schools weed them out to avoid a low pass rate in Grade 12 (Africa Check, 2014:2). They weed out poor performing learners in order to increase the pass rate of the school, and by default, this contributes to a higher pass rate nationally (UN, 2013:67). The schools are now using the progression policy to prevent poor-performing learners from writing the Grade 12 examinations or even diverting them to enroll them as part-time learners in order to achieve a better pass rate (Mola, 2016:2). In 2015, 22 000 Grade 11s (i.e. 37,6% of learners) were progressed and 65 700 Grade 12 learners were progressed nationally (DBE, 2015b:77).

In 2016, 109 000 learners were progressed to Grade 12 (DBE, 2016b:10). This was the second year in which the progression policy was enforced, but it had already doubled in number from 2015. It should be noted that progression in Grades 10-12 does not guarantee the final certification requirements as contemplated in paragraph 37(1)(9) of the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements (NPPPPR) of the NCS Grades R-12 to enable him or her to obtain a National Senior Certificate (DBE, 2015e:8). Learners are progressed until Grade 12 and then abandoned and are expected to pass on their own of which, for some, might be the first time they have to pass because they have been progressed from Grade 1. It should be noted that Grade 12 is a three-year study programme and that, if learners do not understand the Grade 10 and 11 curricula, their chances of passing Grade 12 are limited (Mola, 2016:1).

According to the DBE (2015b:2), the progression legislation was introduced to uphold the best interests of the learners and to minimise unnecessary school dropout in the schooling system so that every learner has the opportunity to achieve an exit qualification such as the NSC. However, Mola (2016:2) argues that the progression policy contributes to high number of dropouts because schools chase pass rates and do little to help learners who are struggling. He further states that the learners who are progressed are the ones who are most likely to drop out because they become discouraged. These learners are out of touch with what is happening in the classroom, and they do not have the foundational knowledge required to be in that grade. The DBE seems to be pushing everyone out of the school system irrespective of whether they will be of any benefit to themselves or to the economy of the country. However, the DBE (2015e:6) states that the dropout rate can be attributed to frustration and loss of hope by learners who have experienced chronic patterns of underperformance in the FET phase.

In 2015, the progression of learners was identified as a major contributing factor to poor performance in the matric examinations (Province of Eastern Cape Education, 2016:2). Learners are progressed if they have failed to satisfy the promotion requirements of either Grade 10 or 11 and have repeated either Grade 10 or 11. However, they must have passed the Language of Learning and Teaching and another three of the seven subjects offered; they must have attended school on a regular basis; absenteeism may not exceed 20 days without a valid reason; and the learner must have complied with the prescribed School-Based Assessment (SBA) requirements for that academic year (DBE, 2015e:4).

Despite the remedial attention the progressed learners are receiving, they are still not coping with the Grade 12 curriculum (Department of the Government Communication and Information System [GCIS], 2015:2). However, SADTU Limpopo Secretariat (2016:2) argues that there is lack of support structures for these learners and non-commitment by the DBE to assist them. Teachers also do not make an effort to assist these learners because they know that they will be progressed anyway (Mola, 2016:2). Progressed learners do not cope with the demands required by the curriculum; thus, modulation was introduced (Province of Eastern Cape Education, 2016:2). Modulation means that the learners can do Grade 12 over two years although there is no guarantee that they will be able to complete it in two years.

The Council of Ministers of Education decided to modulate Grade 12 learners so that they have an option to write fewer subjects (Mola, 2016:2). This implies that progressed learners, based on their performance in the preparatory examination, could choose to write all six

subjects or less in the November examination and the remaining subjects in the following June examination (DBE, 2016d:2). The GCIS (2015:2) adds that modulation will ensure that these learners get the support and content knowledge required to allow them to attain a matric certificate.

The SADTU Limpopo Secretariat (2016:1) condemns modulation because it does not advance the interests of the learners but rather has the effect of manipulating the Grade 12 results. Mola (2016:2) shares the same sentiments. In 2014, an estimated 1 700 Western Cape Grade 12 learners, who failed Grade 11 but were progressed to Grade 12, opted to modulate even though some principals commented that it was almost impossible to modulate the learners because the teachers would not be able to support those learners over two years and simultaneously deal with a new cohort of Grade 12 learners (Fredericks, 2015:1).

Progression is not only applicable in high school; it applies to all the grades. Progression means the advancement of a learner from one grade to the next, excluding Grade R, in spite of the learner not having complied with all promotion requirements, provided that the underperformance of the learner in the previous grade is addressed in the grade to which the learner has been promoted (DBE, 2011a:ix). According to the DBE, progression can be used to prevent a learner from being retained in a phase for a period exceeding four years. The phases are Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3); Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6), Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) and the Further Education and Training phase (Grades 10-12). This means if a learner fails Grade 1, he or she cannot fail Grade 2 or Grade 3; the learner will automatically progress in Grade 2 and 3. The same principle is applicable to all the phases. It means a learner can move from grade to grade without meeting any promotion requirements until Grade 12, and such a learner will definitely have not accumulated any knowledge required for a certain grade. In my experience, such learners are the ones who cause problems in class because they do not understand anything that is going on and, as a result, they lose interest in school and might even end up dropping out.

Progression (Grades 1-8) and promotion (Grades 9-12) of learners to the next grade should be based on recorded evidence in formal assessment tasks. This means that those tasks that are used for formal assessment are recorded and should be used to decide whether a learner should progress or be promoted to the next grade (DBE, 2011a:4). However, with the current system, a learner who does not meet requirements for promotion can be progressed to the next grade in order to prevent the learner being retained for longer than four years in the phase (DBE, 2011a:6).

According to the DBE, (2011a:10), a learner who is not ready to perform at the expected level and who has been retained in the first phase for four years or more and is likely to be retained again in the second phase for four years or more, should receive necessary support. National Professional Teachers' Organisation president of South Africa, Dr Anthea Ceresto states that if you progress a learner in Grade 1 to Grade 2 who has no language ability, research suggests that, considering the size of our classes, it becomes a burden to the Grade 2 teacher who has to teach the grade's curriculum while helping the progressed learner to catch up (Hlophe, 2016:1). Learners who experience barriers to learning should be identified as early as Grade 1, receive necessary support and be channeled accordingly after Grade 9. The burden should not be passed from one teacher to the other. The issue should not be about whether learners are ready to pass a grade or not; rather, it should be about whether the schooling system provides learners with adequate preparation to exit Grade 12.

In October 2017, an urgent principals' meeting was called concerning the modulation of learners who failed three subjects. These learners did not have admission letters, and the principals were taught how to generate them. Four days before the start of the final examination learners were frustrated because they did not know which subjects they were allowed to write. SADTU Limpopo Secretariat, (2016:2) still argued that why should they be treated like any other learners in terms of teaching and learning but differentiated in terms of writing the examinations. Spaull (2015:2) notes that certain people are receiving incentives to make sure that the Grade 12 pass rate goes up irrespective of how this is achieved. Table 2.2 is evidence that the DBE's solution to minimise unnecessary dropouts with the progression policy is ineffective because almost half of each group drop out every year. Progression, however, contributes to poor Grade 12 learner performance because learners who are not academically ready to be in a certain grade are pushed up from one grade to another.

The following factors are not curriculum-related, but they impact on effective teaching and learning.

#### 2.3.2.7 Overcrowded Classrooms

Overcrowded classroom is determined by the average number of learners per teacher. It is one of the most serious problems experienced in South Africa, especially in rural or township schools because it affects curriculum delivery. The curriculum is one-size-fits-all but it only caters for smaller classes. Class size is strongly related to learner performance (Bakasa,

2011:20). Overcrowded classrooms has a negative influence on learners' academic performance (Fakude, 2012:22). Class size affects learners' performance because the teacher cannot pay full attention to every learner in the classroom (Omwirhiren & Anderson, 2016:1). Overcrowded classrooms leads to poor learner performance, ineffective teaching and discipline problems (Inamullah & Shah, 2012 as cited in Van Zyl, 2016:1; Matshipi, Mulaudzi & Mashau, 2016:1).

Overcrowded classrooms are not confined to South Africa. The learner to teacher ratio in Tanzania stands at an average of 52:1 and as high as 72:1 in some regions (Nyandwi, 2014:35). In Pakistan, the average number of learners in most of the classes range from 70-120 (Khan & Mohammad, 2012:10162). In South Africa, the national and provincial average teacher-learner ratio in public schools is set at a maximum of 40 learners per teacher in primary schools and 35 per learner in secondary schools, but schools and classes vary enormously in size and some teachers have classes of 50 learners or more (Department for International Development, 2011:1). In 2013, the national average teacher-learner in public schools in the country was 29:1 ranging from 27:1 in the Free State to 31:1 in Northern Cape (DBE, 2015d:6).

As mentioned in Section 2.2, Finland is a top performing country academically and their class size is small with a teacher ratio of 15:1. Curro Holdings, South Africa's largest private school operator, has a 15:1 teacher ratio across its network of 110 schools, but government schools in South Africa have a ratio exceeding 30:1 (Business Tech, 2016:1). Its schools use the Independent Examination Board curriculum, and, in 2015, 724 learners wrote IEB Grade 12 examinations with 99% passing and 82% gaining university entry (ibid.). Smaller classes boost learners' academic performance (Fakude, 2012:22) and enhance individual attention which has a positive impact on the overall academic performance (Epri, 2016:97). Learners who perform poorly in various subjects would benefit more in smaller classes (Dhurumraj, 2013:62). Smaller classes provide more learning opportunities to adapt programmes individual needs and teacher morale in smaller classes is better (Bakasa, 2011:20).

Larger classes are noisier to the extent that this can impact negatively on classroom discipline (Marais, 2016:2). Teachers in these classes spend more time on disciplining learners than on teaching. There is no effective teaching and learning in large classes, and the classroom environment becomes unproductive *(ibid).* Learners in larger classes display negative learning behaviours such as not responding to the teachers' questions and expecting the teacher to provide the answers to questions (Epri, 2016:97). Overcrowding

not only affects learner performance but also puts stress on teachers (Khan & Mohammad, 2012:101). Teachers in overcrowded classes are unable to provide individual attention, and, as a result, some learners may fall behind (Frontiers Academy, 2014:1). Learners in overcrowded classes may find it difficult to follow the lesson or ask questions when they do not understand the material taught (Department for International Development, 2011:1).

#### 2.3.2.8 Lack of Parental Support

A major factor contributing to poor learner performance is lack of parental involvement (Nkadi, 2015:119). If parents are ignorant about what happens in schools, they may not be able to provide much guidance and help their children's performance to improve (Reche, et al., 2012:132). Parents must attend meetings requested by the school and regularly visit the school to enquire about the progress of their children (DBE, 2015b:11). Black parents do not value their children's education. They do not attend any parents' meetings, and even when called to discuss the child's behaviour or learning barriers, they still do not come. They do not collect their children's term reports to check if their children are coping. The only time when the parents arrive is at the end of the year when the learner has been kept back.

Learners perform well if they are properly guided by their parents (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012:22). Parental involvement can provide a more stable and continuously positive influence that could improve learner performance (Mji & Makgato, 2006:262) as they provide learning opportunities for their children. The absence of such support results in learners having low self-esteem (Rammala, 2009:4), and their performance level may drop if they are unable to get the help they require from their parents (Dhurumraj, 2013:18). Parents should, where needed, arrange additional tuition in identified subjects based on the performance of a learner (DBE, 2015f:11).

#### 2.3.2.9 Absenteeism

Absenteeism means a learner or a teacher staying away from school or work. It affects teaching and learning and adversely affects learner performance. When learners are absent from school, they tend to miss out on learning many concepts, material taught will be difficult to understand when studying alone, and they will probably not do well in the examinations (Reche, et al., 2012:132). However, the DBE (2015e:4) encourages learners to attend school on a regular basis because if their absenteeism is in excess of 20 days without a valid reason, they will disqualify the learner from being progressed.

Teacher absenteeism also affects teaching and learning because learners go unattended and the work that is supposed to be covered for those days will not be done. Absenteeism limits instructional time and, as a result, the syllabus will not be completed leading to poor performance in the examinations (Reche, et al., 2012:132). When a teacher is absent, the time lost affects all their learners, unlike individual learners who can catch up after an absence (Jacobsohn, 2017:1).

In my opinion dropout rates affect the Grade 12 learner performance pass rate percentages. Grade 12 learner performance pass percentages should be calculated using the number of learners who entered the system in Grade 1 or Grade 2. For the system to be effective, all the learners should be accounted for. Dropout rates is discussed in the next section.

## 2.4 DROPOUT RATES

Dropping out means that many young people will never get the chance to write Grade 12 examinations let alone pass them (Africa Check, 2014:3). Dropping out, in this study, refers to individuals aged 14 to 21 who are currently not enrolled in school. If more learners drop out of school, it could be an indication that educational system is ineffective.

### 2.4.1 Dropout rates internationally

Internationally, in 2008, about 67 million learners dropped out of school without acquiring a basic education, knowledge and skills (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2011:1). Eurostat (2014:1) identified Turkey, Spain, Malta, Iceland and Portugal as five countries in the northern hemisphere that have high dropout rates. In the UK, there is a high dropout rate at the age of 16, meaning only few learners are continuing their education beyond 16 (Hanse & Vignoles, n.d.:12). Fifteen percent of school dropouts are clustered in California, the Southwest, and the Old South (Clark, 2009:1). In China, the dropout rate is about 40%, the reason being that learners are unhappy with their studies (Latif, Chaudhary & Hammayun, 2015:1). In sub-Saharan Africa, only 56% of learners complete a full primary school education (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, 2013:1).

### 2.4.2 Dropout rates in South Africa

In South Africa, the biggest challenge is not who passes or fails the final examinations, but the large number of pupils who drop out of school before Grade 12 (Africa Check, 2015:4). Out of 1,2 million learners who started Grade 1 in 2002, 700 000 dropped out of school before their final examination in Grade 12 in 2012 (Jensen, 2014:1). Of 100 learners that

started school 12 years ago, only 51 made it to Grade 12 in 2013, 40 passed and 16 qualified to go to university (Spaull, 2013:3). Again out of 1,2 million learners who started Grade 1 in 2003, 600 000 of them dropped out of school before their final examinations (Business Tech, 2015b:1). Of 100 learners who started Grade 1 in 2003 only 49 made it to Grade 12 in 2014, 37 passed and 14 qualified to go to university (Spaul, 2017:1). Table 2.2 reveals massive dropout rates between Grades 10-12.

Table 2.2: South African dropout rates from 2010-2014 (Equal Education, 2015:2; News24, 2017a:1)

| Year | Grade 10 enrolment (2008-2012 | Grade 12 enrolment (2010-2014 | % dropout Grade 10-12 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2010** | 1 076 527 | 578 384 | 46% |
| **2011** | 1 017 431 | 534 498 | 47% |
| **2012** | 1 039 762 | 551 498 | 47% |
| **2013** | 1 094 189 | 576 490 | 49% |
| **2014** | 1 100 877 | 610 178 | 45% |

According to Table 2.2, every year, approximately half of the learners registered in Grade 10 do not make it to Grade 12. DBE's focus on the national Grade 12 pass rate obscures the problems in the schooling system that lead learners to drop out (Jacobsohn, 2017:3). Jansen (2016, as cited in Child, 2018:1) stated that, in 2017, more than half of the learners who started Grade 1 did not reach Grade 12 (between Grade 1 and 12 more than 645 000 learners dropped out).

### 2.4.3 Factors contributing to Dropout Rates

In spite of positive developments, there is a rising concern with the increasing number of dropouts (UNESCO, 2010:2). Schools should identify early which learners are likely to drop out in order to address the high school problem (Burrus & Roberts, 2012:1). Pregnant learners, those learners whose parents do not show interest in their studies and poor academic performers are at risk of dropping out (Latif, Chaudhry & Hammayun, 2015:1).

A survey conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2014 also revealed that poor academic performance is one of the reason why learners drop out of school (Business Tech, 2015b:1). The counter-argument is that if learners are performing well, they might be motivated to

staying in school (Christopher, 2013:1). If learners fail constantly, they will almost certainly lack self-confidence and give up school (Verma, 2015:1).

Chirtes (2010:3) notes that a lack of parental support contributes to learning difficulties experienced by their children and could lead to high dropout rates. If parents are actively involved in the learners' education, it provides stability and learners become motivated (Mnguni, 2014:49). Parents' attitudes towards education can affect how learners perform (Gaunt, 2017:1). Learners will not see the purpose of staying at school if parents do not care about their achievements (Christopher, 2013:1). If parents do not show any interest or pay attention to learners' education, the learner might not see any reason to follow through with the school work and may choose to drop out (Tucker, 2017:1). Lack of interest and supervision of teenage learners by parents can result in their neglecting school (Chirtes, 2010:32). Parents need to be made aware that motivation in the home environment is an important factor in encouraging learners to continue with their studies (Dekeza-Tsomo, 2012:5).

One-third of teenage girls drop out of high school because of pregnancy (Tucker, 2017:1). Drop out is exacerbated by a lack of emotional and financial support (Molly, 2017:1). Pregnant girls are frequently absent because they have appointments to go to the clinic and they are also frequently sick. As a result, they do not want to do anything including going to school (Mnguni, 2014:33). They may struggle with morning sickness or fatigue and have difficulty keeping up with their schoolwork (Tucker, 2017:1). It is extremely difficult to manage a healthy pregnancy while still in school (Molly, 2017:1).

It is my opinion that dropout rates may lead to underperformance. Therefore, a discussion of underperformance in South African secondary schools follows next.

## 2.5 UNDERPERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is crucial to have a detailed understanding of the factors that benefit and hinder the academic progress of learners (Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011:10). For example, the main cause of underperformance in Mathematics is a failure to extend the ability of learners from counting to true calculating in their primary schooling (Spaull, 2017:1). The problem of underperforming starts in the foundation phase and it gets worse by the time the learners get to Grade 9 (UN, 2013:77). Poor performance in schools has long-term consequences both for the individual and for society as a whole (OECD, 2017:2). As illustrated in Table 2.3, more than 6 000 schools have been underperforming since 2010. It

is obvious that serious interventions are long overdue and, if there are measures in place to support these schools, they are certainly ineffective.

Table 2.3: Number of schools underperforming in South Africa from 2010-2017 (DBE, 2013b:70; 2014b:4; 2015a:53; 2016a:4; 2017d:6)

| YEAR | 0-19,9% | 20-39,9% | 40-59,9% | TOTAL NO. OF SCHOOLS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010 | 172 | 844 | 1510 | 6516 |
| 2011 | 156 | 650 | 1437 | 6570 |
| 2012 | 126 | 484 | 1229 | 6623 |
| 2013 | 82 | 334 | 991 | 6676 |
| 2014 | 150 | 469 | 1053 | 6704 |
| 2015 | 243 | 775 | 1310 | 6772 |
| 2016 | 196 | 671 | 1221 | 6814 |
| 2017 | 109 | 488 | 1166 | 6805 |

Table 2.3 indicates that between 82 and 243 schools had pass rates of between 0 and 19%. However, according to the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (The Presidency, 2011:65), the HOD must annually identify any public school that is underperforming and issue a written notice to the school to notify them that the standard of learner performance is below the standard prescribed by the NCS. The principal must, within 14 days after delivery of the notice, respond to the notice with a plan for corrective measures. The Head of Department must take all reasonable steps to assist a school identified in addressing the underperformance (ibid.).

In 2016, 18 schools obtained a 0% pass rate (Jacobsohn, 2017:1). Contrary to the South African Schools Act, the DBE decided that schools that had achieved a 0% pass rate would not be offering Grade 10-12 anymore, and that, after completion of Grade 9, learners would be transferred to better performing schools (Parliament Monitoring Group, 2009:1). This cannot be a solution because it will create more problems. What if there are several schools with a 0% pass rate in a particular area? It will mean that there are fewer secondary schools and overcrowded classrooms which will lead to poor performance.

In 2016, 38 schools had a pass rate of less than 40% over a five-year period (DBE, 2016a:12). Even in 2014, 24 schools in Eastern Cape, 5 in Kwazulu Natal and 16 in Limpopo achieved below 40% over a five-year period (DBE, 2014b:12). The question is: what is the

DBE doing to support and improve the performance in those schools? The DBE needs to review its strategy as a matter of priority because more schools are underperforming yearly. On the contrary, if the school is underperforming, the principal will be counseled as contemplated in section 2(5)b(ii) of Schedule 1 to the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, and this may include the appointment of an academic mentor to take over the functions and responsibilities of the principal for a period determined by the HOD (The Presidency, 2011:66). If this is implemented, it will not be possible to have the same schools underperforming for a period of five years.

Promotion requirements affect learner performance therefore an overview of promotion requirements is presented in the next section.

## 2.6 PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Grade 10-12 promotion requirements dictate that a learner must achieve 40% in three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home Language level, and 30% in three subjects provided the SBA component is submitted in the subject failed (DBE, 2015a:16). Learners in Grades 7-9 will be promoted from grade to grade if they take nine subjects and have complied with the promotion requirements in eight of the subjects as follows: they must achieve 50-59% in one language at Home Language level, 40-49% in the second required official language at First Additional Language level, 40-49% in Mathematics, 40-49% in any three of the required subjects, 30-39% in any two of the other required subjects (DBE, 2011a:16). The big question is whether these promotion requirements are upheld. It is doubtful since the NPPPPR articulates that a learner may only be retained once in the phase in order to prevent a learner being retained in a phase for longer than four years (DBE, 2011a:10). This means that promotion requirements will not be upheld should the learner fail once in a phase. A learner may only be held back once in Grades 7-9 and once again between Grades 10-12, regardless of whether she or he has met the promotion requirements. Learners move from one grade to the next irrespective of whether they are competent to progress to the next grade. Moreover, parents may lodge an appeal if the learner's age is above the age cohort for a particular grade.

Furthermore, lists of learners at risk should be compiled for Grades 7-11, identifying learners that might not meet the promotion requirements at the end of the year (DBE, 2015g:3). No learner may be listed on the possible retention schedule without documented proof of continuous support and intervention and evidence that the parents were regularly informed of the learner's needs and support (DBE, 2015e:241). This means that if there is no proof

of support and intervention, then the learner will be progressed by the district. From my experience as a teacher, I realised that learners are aware of this policy, and, as a matter of fact, some of them refused to do their SBA tasks knowing that the teacher is going to offer them an expanded opportunity. The worst policy is that no learner is allowed to be awarded a zero mark. This then takes away responsibility from a learner and burdens the teacher. This indicates that the South African DBE focuses only on the number of passes and not on the quality of education. In cases where a learner did not do the SBA or Practical Assessment Task for a certain subject, the learner is given three weeks before the commencement of the final end-of-year examination to submit the outstanding work (DBE, 2011a:7).

Compliance with the SBA requirements ensures that the learner has satisfied the assessment requirements of the subject and this will confirm the learners' commitment to the subject (DBE, 2015e:7). Learners may, however, submit the SBA because they need to write the final examination but with little real effort. The task will be of a poor quality because the promotion requirements are very low and do not motivate the learners to work hard. Moreover, if learners' SBA year mark for a certain subject is below seven out of 25, the reasons for this low mark must be submitted (Gauteng Province Education, 2017:1). The teacher must complete the relevant forms and provide reasons for the low mark, not the learner, and this might encourage the teacher to provide learners with answers during the year in order to avoid paperwork at the end of the year.

A 30% pass rate means that a learner has not mastered the subject as it denotes passing only three questions out of ten. Furthermore, a condonation of a maximum of one subject will only be applied to a Grade 12 learner in the final examination if such a learner requires an additional 2% either to obtain a pass at 30% or 40% (DBE, 2011a:21). Such a condonation will be applied in one subject, provided the application of the condonation allows the learner to obtain the NSC qualification. However, the admission requirement to a Bachelor's Degree is NSC with an achievement of 50-59% in four recognized, 20-credit subjects (DBE, 2015b:16). This gap between the official low pass mark set at Grade 12 level and high scores required for admission at some universities shows lack of trust in the quality of education in secondary schools.

The current assumption is that results in South African schools are manipulated, and it is, therefore, imperative to discuss the manipulation of results. Manipulation of results affects learner performance because the results that have been portrait from Grade1 to Grade 12 is not the true reflection of learners' performance.

## 2.7 MANIPULATION OF RESULTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Spaull (2015, as cited in News24, 2017b:1) observed that the process of standardisation of Grade 12 results is a problem and universities are likely to feel the brunt of this mark adjustment when their first-year students are not as well-equipped to succeed as their grades seem to indicate. According to the chairperson of the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (UMALUSI), after the examinations are written, teams of researchers then perform a comparative analysis of the current and previous year's papers for each subject to decide if they were too easy or too hard. These research findings are then compared to the actual results to decide which marks need to be adjusted and by how much (Jacobsohn, 2017:2). A major concern is the fact that they cannot moderate the question papers and adjust the papers before they are written, which would mean that the marks would not have to be adjusted. Question papers are set by a panel with the highest level of knowledge and skills which constitutes of a minimum of three examiners, a chief examiner and a team of two internal moderators based on their expertise and experience. An external moderator verifies, evaluates and approves all the question papers (DBE, 2015a:26). Since these teams consist of experts, it seems to be a moot point that they should be able to determine whether the paper is too easy or too difficult before the paper is written.

According to the DBE (2015a:37), to ensure that the question papers that are set are appropriate for the designated target group, a sample of question papers is subjected to prewriting under examination conditions by a teacher who has had adequate exposure and experience in teaching the subject at Grade 12 level. Responses from the prewriting of the question paper are factored into the question papers and this intervention has helped to eliminate issues pertaining to ambiguity in the wording of questions, cognitive demands and difficulty level of specific questions (ibid.).

In 2010, 58 subjects were written, nine subjects' marks were adjusted upwards and, in 10 subjects, they were adjusted downwards (DBE, 2010:22). In 2011, UMALUSI announced that marks for 11 Grade 12 subjects were adjusted by more than 5%. In the 2013 NCS examinations, five subjects were adjusted upwards and 16 subjects were adjusted downwards after reviewing the average performance of learners in the previous examinations (UMALUSI, 2014:3). In the 2014 CAPS examinations, marks for 13 subjects were adjusted upwards and 10 subjects were adjusted downwards (GCIS, 2015:1). In 2016, 32 out of 58 subjects had their marks adjusted during the standardisation process, 28 subjects upwards and four subjects downwards (Davis, 2017:4). In 2017, 16 out of 58

subjects were adjusted upwards and four were adjusted downwards (UMALUSI, 2017:5). This makes it difficult for anyone to understand what learners actually achieved (The Clute Institute, 2012:1217). UMALUSI failed to provide evidence that the papers were more demanding, which is contrary to their motto which states that its processes are made transparent to all who have an interest in the examinations (Davis, 2017:4).

Unfortunately, the adjustment of marks not only applies to Grade 12 learners' marks. According to the National Assessment Circular 3 of 2015 for Grades 7-9, if the overall grade pass percentage for 2014 is lower than the average pass percentage for the previous three years in that grade by more than 5%, then the results at that school for that specific grade must be adjusted (DBE, 2015b:2). A maximum of two subjects per learner may be adjusted; but, if the target pass percentage is not achieved with the adjustment of two subjects, then an additional subject/subjects may be adjusted until the target pass percentage is achieved (ibid.). A maximum of 10% per subject will be allowed per learner (ibid). This is approximately 30 marks which means one learner could receive approximately 90 marks if adjustment is done in three subjects. How is adjusting of marks helping the learners? This is where I question whether all these adjustments are simply done to maintain the reputation of the DBE.

If this is the case, clearly, South Africa will not produce skilled learners who will add value to the economy of the country. Moreover, after all those adjustments, National Assessment Circular 3 of 2016 was issued, which states that in case where a learner in Grades 7 to 9, who has met all the requirements in respect of promotion from one grade to the next grade, but has not attained level 3 (40%) in Mathematics and therefore has to be retained, such a learner must be condoned in Mathematics provided they attained a minimum of 20% in Mathematics (DBE, 2016c:1). The process of mark adjustment as set out in National Assessment Circular 3 of 2015 must first be applied and only thereafter can this special condonation dispensation be effected (ibid.). In 2017, the process of mark adjustment as set out in National Assessment Circular 3 of 2015 must first be applied and then a mark adjustment of 5% can be applied in a maximum of three subjects; thereafter, the condonation in Mathematics must be applied for Grade 7-9 (DBE, 2017c:2).

In 2015, the Minister of Basic Education stated: "We have increased the pass requirements for Grades 7-9, the pass mark for Grade 12 will also be increased as part of the efforts to continue to bring quality to our education" (DBE, 2015a:3). However, based on the discussion above, the quality education in South Africa is compromised since everything is based on pushing the learners out of the system and the focus is on pass rates, irrespective

of quality. The increase in the pass requirements will inevitably mean an increase in mark adjustments.

Circular E35 of 2016 was issued to ensure that no learner in Grades 10 and 11 was disadvantaged due to writing of the National Common Examination papers in Mathematics and Physical Sciences. The norm had to be calculated for 2013, 2014 and 2015 and divided by three to get an average and if the average for 2016 and the norm were different, then the difference must be added to the percentage score of each learner, with a maximum of 10% percentage points being applied (DBE, 2016b:3). All the circulars stipulate that they do not change the progression requirements as stipulated in the NPPPPR and the NCS Grades R-12. Of concern is the fact that policy documents in South Africa can be amended anytime whenever there is poor performance. The next section presents strategies to improve Grade 12 learner performance.

## 2.8 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE GRADE 12 LEARNER PERFORMANCE

It should be noted that all stakeholders in education should work together in order to improve the performance of the school (Modisaotsile, 2012:3). Variation in performance is calculated on the following basis: learners (50%), teachers (30%), parents (10%), the school (5%) and the principal (5%) (Human Sciences Research Council, 2007:8). This is an indication that all stakeholders play a major role in improving learner performance. Some poorly-resourced schools have performed well because of strong leadership given by principals who insist that teachers come to school punctually, teach when they should teach, and remain sober (Modisaotsile, 2012:5).

The government must first address the two types of schools that we have in South Africa, namely the resourced and under-resourced schools. All schools should have equal resources (including desks, chairs and textbooks), enough teachers and effective principals.

Figure 2.1 is used to explain the strategies to improve Grade 12 learner performance.

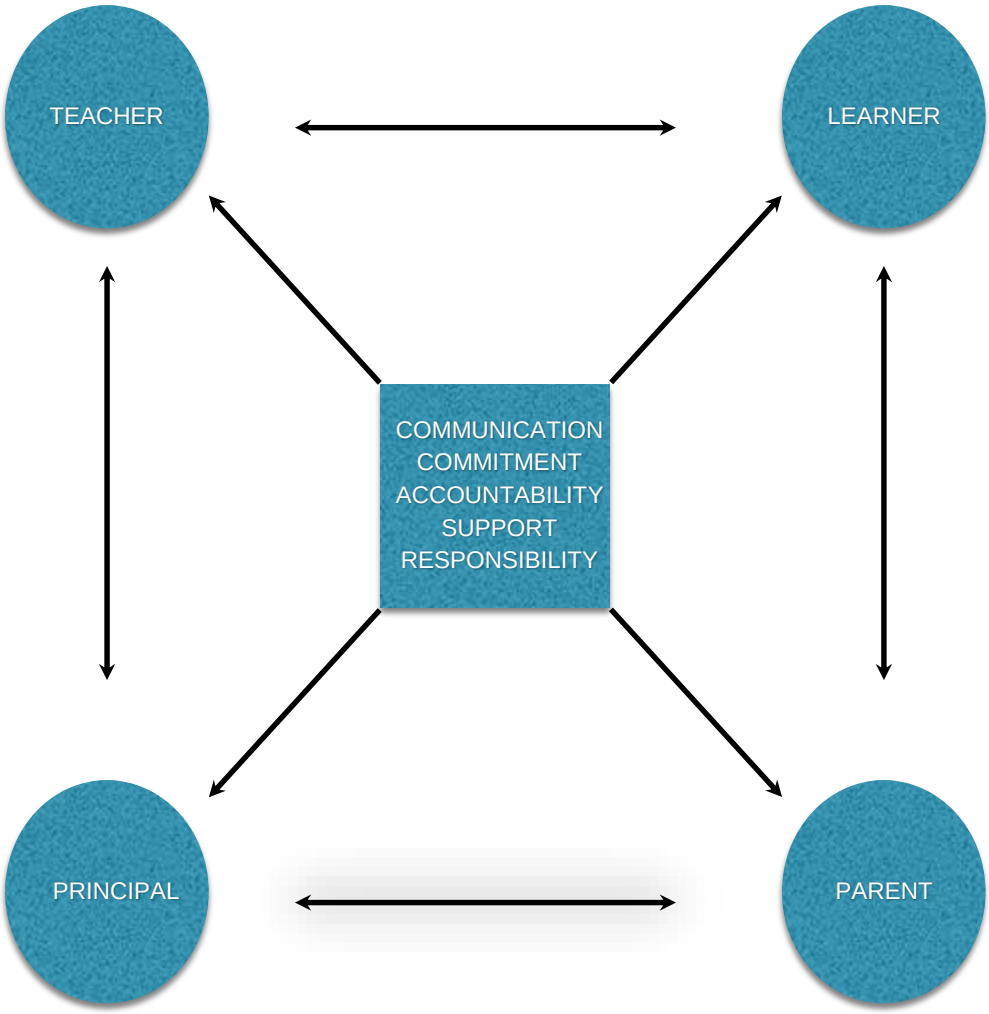


Figure 2.1 Strategies to improve Grade 12 Learner Performance

From Figure 2.1, it is clear that effective teaching and learning needs the teachers, learners, parents and principals to work together to develop the knowledge and skills required to achieve the desired results. Each stakeholder must ensure that communication, commitment, accountability, support and responsibility are emphasised. All the stakeholders are partners in education; therefore, each stakeholder needs to take their role seriously. Every country needs a structure that promotes good teaching and attracts and retains the best teachers and principals and management teams that play their roles effectively to ensure an environment that is conducive to learning (Van Der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull & Armstrong, 2011:2).

### 2.8.1 Learners

According to Mahomed (2004:5), we need to instill the culture of reading among learners. Learners should be encouraged to read more, thus improving language skills (Dhurumraj, 2013:64). Learners need to be constantly motivated because they might be capable but might simply not care enough about education to exert the effort (Higherlife Foundation, 2016:2). If learners are motivated, they will try to achieve to the best of their abilities and maintain consistency in that achievement (Fakude, 2012:12). They will strive to achieve high marks even if they are not good in a certain subject (Rammala, 2009:5). They will also attend school regularly where their morale can be boosted and dropout rates can be minimised (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013:38). Learners need to have a positive attitude towards their school work in order for them to perform better. They must understand that Grade 12 is a study experience, and if they do not know the Grade 10 and 11 curricula, their chances of making it to and through Grade 12 are limited (Mola, 2016:3). Learners must commit themselves to do their school work during classes, complete their homework and catch up on missed work due to absenteeism (The Presidency, 2011:100).

In January 2010, Sci-Bono Discovery Centre developed a special programme, the Secondary School Improvement Programme (SSIP) for schools that had achieved less than an 80% pass rate for Grade 12 examinations (GCIS, 2010:461). The question that needs to be answered is whether these interventions are not implemented too late in the learners' school career. To improve the quality of Grade 12 results, I believe that SSIP should be implemented as from Grade 10 rather than Grade 12 only, because learners who are well taught and thoroughly prepared in the entire phase, are not likely to experience academic problems in Grade 12. Basically, the Grade 12 curriculum starts in Grade 10. Programmes that aim at improving Grade 10 and 11 should be implemented instead of schools weeding out the poor performers in these two grades (UN, 2013:77).

### 2.8.2 Principals

Principals must perform their duties as though they were teachers, meaning that they should act with the heart, mind, soul, knowledge, devotion, integrity and priority of a teacher in order to improve learner performance (Babbage, 2013:7). They must ensure that their school is disciplined (learners and teachers) and create an environment conducive for learning. All the schools that are performing well have curriculum standards which are clear and have high expectations for what learners should achieve (McKinsey, 2007:51). Principals must prepare and submit to the HOD their academic performance improvement plans and the

HOD may approve the plan with recommendations depending on the circumstances (The Presidency, 2011:27).

In the 2015/16 financial year, 1 435 principals were appointed across all provinces (DBE, 2015c:91). The DBE had decided to evaluate the effectiveness of these principals through competency tests, but the competency tests for principals were not written in eight provinces (ibid). Thus, some principals may not be equipped with skills relating to accountability at that level leading to poor administration and management; hence, the need for leadership and management training (DBE, 2015c:15). It remains the responsibility of the DBE to ensure that improvement plans are implemented and monitored in order for them to be effective.

### 2.8.3 Teachers

The DBE must get the top Grade 12 learners to become teachers. In South Africa, the Funza Lushaka Bursary is awarded to promote teaching as a profession. It covers most of the expenses, including tuition, accommodation, meals, books and learning materials and, if possible, a small monthly stipend on condition that they teach at a public school for the same number of years that they received the bursary (DBE, 2017a:3). Three or four years of teaching in a public school is a small price to pay for anyone who desperately needs finance for higher education. There are many students in South Africa who are financially constrained and cannot afford to go to university, and I believe that this bursary may attract the wrong people to become teachers, due to the financial crisis that they might be facing. Moreover, these students are given first priority when it comes to employment of teachers in public schools, and there is no guarantee that they would be the best teachers.

The requirement for this bursary is 60% on the standard grade, or 50% on the higher grade in Grade 12 (DBE, 2017a:2). There should be a competency test for those interested in becoming a teacher in order to check if they are right for this profession. During the 2015/16 financial year, 10 216 young qualified teachers entered the system, which is 1 616 above the annual target of 8600 (DBE, 2015c:41). The question is: what is the DBE doing to make sure that they keep these teachers from changing careers? During 2015/16 financial year, 1 381 young, qualified teachers left the profession (DBE, 2015c:80). According to the Higherlife Foundation (2016:2), South Africa needs 15 000 more teachers per year to enter the profession. The Funza Lushaka bursary will keep the number of teachers flowing into the system but it will not guarantee that there will stay in the profession.

Teachers should be recognised and rewarded adequately by the government as this would motivate them to work harder (Modisaotsile, 2012:6). The solution for this is to provide them

with good starting salary (McKinsey, 2007:26). They deserve more autonomy and respect, and need to be treated more as professionals and acknowledged (US DoE, 2011:1). To improve learner performance, teachers need support systems that strengthen their instructional, leadership and management capacity (Wan & Gut, 2011:47).

### 2.8.4 Parents

The most effective strategy to improve learner performance is to engage parents in learning. Regular consultation with parents on the children's progress is necessary (Brighouse & Woods, 2013:21). Parents are stakeholders in education and if they are involved, learners behave and perform better (Ige, 2016:67). Parents are expected to take an active interest in their children's schoolwork and make it possible for the children to complete their assigned homework (The Presidency, 2011:101). They must check their children's books regularly and make sure that they do their homework. Parents should be encouraged to create a conducive learning environment for their children at home (Nkadi, 2015:122). It is their responsibility to make sure that learners become valuable citizens of the nation (Muhammad, Tahir, Muhammad & Hassan, 2011:45).

In order to fully understand the present problems and challenges regarding learner performance, it is necessary to look at the challenges experienced with the South African curriculum.

## 2.9 CURRICULUM CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN SOUTH AFRICA

The ongoing crisis with South African education and the current curriculum is failing the majority of South African youth (Spaull, 2013:1). Progress has been made in terms of education legislation, policy development, curriculum reform and implementation of new ways of delivering education but challenges such as learner outcomes, other resources and labour market still remain a problem (OECD, 2008a:3). Despite a number of education reforms, the country still faces a considerable skills shortage because of poor education standards, crime, emigration and structural changes in the economy (Rasool & Botha, 2011:11). It is time to analyse the current situation and assess progress in our curriculum. In order to improve our curriculum, it is necessary to outline the historical evolution of the South African curriculum. My schematic presentation of curriculum changes in South Africa from 1948 to 2011 is presented in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2. 2: Curriculum Changes in South Africa from 1948 to 2011

### 2.9.1 Bantu Education

The Nationalist Party (NP) of South Africa was elected into power in 1948 with a strong apartheid agenda and introduced the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which was aimed at producing a literate but unskilled labour force (Du Plooy, Henkeman & Nyoka, 2014:3). This system had 18 different education departments separated by race, geography and ideology, under the Department of National Education, each conducting its own examinations (DoE, 2003:n.p.). Throughout the 1980s, South Africa was characterised by resistance to the injustices of apartheid; however, rapid transformation was sparked by riots in 1976 (DoE, 2002:5). The apartheid system had made access to quality education exclusive to white people (UN, 2011:3). Education for white learners was prioritised when it came to equipment, funding, facilities and teacher training while education for black learners was neglected (Rice, 2010:2). This dysfunctional and polarised apartheid educational system urgently needed to be changed (Ashton, 2008:1), and, after the election in 1994, the National Education and Training Forum began the process of syllabus revision (DoE, 2002:4). C2005 was then introduced.

### 2.9.2 Curriculum 2005

In 1998, C2005 was introduced to redress the imbalances of the past (DoE, 2002:5). It was developed on a national level and teachers only became involved when they received training (Arend, 2005:233); they had nothing to do with the development of the curriculum, but they had to implement it. It created confusion among teachers and while they were still coming to grips with it, a revised version of the curriculum was already being introduced, again with no teacher consultation (Jansen & Taylor, 2003:39). There were so many new concepts that teachers and learners needed to digest and teachers did not know exactly what was required of them because the system required hours of administration by each teacher (Naidoo, 2011:1). If teachers are confused, how can they expect better performance from the learners? Teachers rather than anyone else know what can achieve better results (Babbage, 2013:viii).

When C2005 was implemented, learner portfolio files were introduced. Teachers were directed to ensure the completion of given tasks that learners needed to do for each term.

This forced them to rush in order to cover what was required by the curriculum. This caused a lot of negativity from teachers and learners because at the end of the day, it was all about completion of syllabus not about effective teaching and learning. However, it was a strategy for the DoE to enforce common assessment standards even though the quality of education might be compromised. Chisholm (2003:10) added that the classrooms were under-resourced with poorly qualified teachers who were not confident in their subject content knowledge. They were not specifically supported for the implementation of curriculum and also lack of appropriate learning materials was a problem (Steyn, Steyn, De Waal & Wolhuter, 2011:110). Effective school leadership and quality teaching by principals was lacking and dedicated, competent and experienced teachers were overlooked when implementing C2005 (Rice, 2010:1).

Van Niekerk (1998, as cited in Van Wyk, 2008:2) noted that in other countries for example, Finland where the OBE approach was applied, every teacher had an assistant that helped with paperwork and evaluation, and in South Africa teachers did not have such assistance. She further mentioned that the average ratio of learner per teacher in C2005 is normally between 9: 1 and 16: 1 (according to the class type) and in South Africa, the ratio is 55: 1. During 2006, the average class size of public school was 39 for primary schools and 41 for secondary schools (DoE, 2007:10). C2005 relies on resourceful and well-trained teachers but it is not the case in South Africa (UMALUSI, 2010a:5). However, the review team instructed by Minister Kadar Asmal revealed that C2005 was not an issue but the problems lay with its implementation: teacher training, learning support materials, provincial support and timeframes (Chisholm, 2003:10). Teachers faced difficult choices, staffing and curricula, and teacher education issues compounded problems (Weber, 2008:xi). As a result of challenges experienced, C2005 was modified and gave rise to the NCS.

### 2.9.3 The National Curriculum Statement

The NCS introduced two official languages provided that one of the two was Home Language, Mathematics or Mathematics literacy and Life Orientation as compulsory subjects (DBE, 2011a:x). Since the introduction of the NCS in 2006, all learners were compelled to take Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy to Grade 12 irrespective of whether they had an aptitude for numbers (Van Wyk, 2008:1). Schools are encouraging learners to do Mathematical Literacy in order to increase the pass rate (UN, 2013:68). Moreover, many learners pass Grade 12 with a combination of subjects that allows no entry to the universities and jobs (Business Tech, 2015a:3).

The curriculum problems did not end with the phasing out of C2005, they accelerated even further. The review team revised the curriculum and found that NCS did not have a clear and detailed implementation plan unlike C2005. They also found that assessment support and guidance was not detailed enough, curriculum supporting documents e.g. learning programme guidelines, were found to be unhelpful, teacher training was superficial and did not clarify the points of departure nor did it address the call for training in subject content and finally the language policy specified in the NCS was never communicated (DBE, 2009:13).

UMALUSI also reviewed the curriculum and revealed that the new content and the approaches that were introduced were unfamiliar to teachers; the NCS does not enable a wider range of learners to engage meaningfully in the learning process, its adaptability in South African context where many teachers are underprepared is a concern; and lastly the unevenness between the different subjects in terms of difficulty of the examination was problematic (UMALUSI, 2010b:31). Reyneke, Meyer & Nel (2010:10) add that inadequate training of teachers led to poor understanding of the curriculum; lack of resources, support materials, lack of poor standard, poor moderation and the illiteracy of learners coming the system and a heavy workload were issues of concern. Again, similar problems with C2005 were experienced with NCS. As a result of challenges experienced with NCS, the CAPS was then introduced in 2012 in Grade 10.

### 2.9.4 The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

The CAPS is a modification of what we teach and not how we teach (Du Plessis, 2013:1). One of the aims of the CAPS was to reduce the administrative load on teachers so that they could focus on what the key curriculum and personal issues, which have a direct impact on learning and achievement (Maskew Miller Longman, 2012:1). The CAPS was aimed at the strengthening of the NCS and clearly specifies what should be taught, which topic should be covered per subject, per grade, per quarter of the school calendar year, and it also provides guidelines on how assessment must be carried out (DBE, 2015a:n.p). Already there is a concern that there is not enough time to prepare teachers to implement the changes and these could once again lead to further teacher confusion and anxiety (Catholic Institute of Education, 2010:1). Workshops did not prepare teachers for the challenges they experience in the classroom but only ensured that the teachers understand the policy (Moodley, 2013:91).

Teachers are not properly trained for implementing the CAPS and there is lack of favourable conditions including resources, qualified teachers and there is no support from the DBE (Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2014:380). In Free State, SADTU members complained that teachers had received only one day's training and Mrs Angie Motshekga told parliament that teachers in seven provinces did not receive CAPS training in 2010 (Nkosi, 2012:2). Du Plessis and Marais (2015:12) note that there is a lot of work for teachers and learners in the Foundation phase, lack of resources, higher failure rate and poor performance in Languages and Mathematics. Another challenge is the rapid pace of teaching required by the curriculum (Kamla, 2016:70). Teachers cannot spend enough time with the slow learners because they have to rush through the syllabus in order to complete the content (Moodley, 2013:92). This encourages teachers to teach fast learners, leaving slow learners behind (Du Plessis, 2013:7).

Seale (2012:4) adds that the teachers and the learners are made to work fast and the CAPS is too long. CAPS is too heavy on content and teachers are struggling to cover the immense amount of content in class, thus overburdening learners with homework (Goetze, 2016:2). Research conducted by UMALUSI reveals that in most subjects, the content covered in the CAPS does not significantly differ in breadth and depth from the content in the NCS except that in Mathematics, the content exceeds that of the NCS in both depth and breadth. In Life Sciences, there has been reduction in breadth and depth of the content in the Grade 12 CAPS while the remaining content in Grades 10 and 11 is such that there is insufficient time for the topics to be covered (UMALUSI, 2014:60). The CAPS is solely focused on assessments, introducing an assessment in Grades 1-3 which places an unnecessary burden on children when they are not ready to handle the pressure of assessments (Goetze, 2016:3). The CAPS is also causing confusion among student teachers and recently graduated teachers because how they were taught does not always correspond with the reality in schools (Coetzee, 2012:1). This is an indication that there is no communication between Higher Education and Training institutions and the DBE. A number of concerns were received from teachers, teacher unions and other stakeholders with regard to the complexity of implementing its Section four which is meant to provide guidance on how to conduct both formal and informal assessment activities (DBE, 2017b:3). In 2018, there was a call again for public comments after ongoing complaints from educational leaders about the overload of content as well as SBA (Government Notice, 2018:1). Teachers were given 21 days to forward their comments. This was during September when teachers are busy with controlled tests.

## 2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The literature review of the international overview of learner performance was briefly discussed. Learner performance in South Africa was discussed with special reference to statistical scenario, factors contributing to poor learner performance, dropout rates and underperforming schools. Progression is the main contributor of poor learner performance. Learners who are progressed do not have the subject content foundation required for that grade. The time allocated to complete the syllabus is not enough and does not even cater for progressed learners. Promotion requirements and manipulation of results in South African secondary schools were investigated. Promotion requirements are very low because learners are allowed to pass with 30%. Moreover, marks are adjusted for learners to move from one grade to the next and condonation on Mathematics exists. Ways in which the curriculum can be effectively implemented in order to improve Grade 12 learner performance were suggested. Curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa were also presented.

The next chapter will present the conceptual and theoretical frameworks on curricular matters.

# CHAPTER 3: CURRICULUM FACTORS: A THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Chapter 2 was to provide the contextual framework of the study. Historical overview of the learner performance, dropout rates and underperformance in schools internationally as well as in South Africa were discussed. Curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa was presented. Effectiveness of promotion requirements and manipulation of results were analysed. Strategies to improve learner performance internationally and in South Africa were also discussed.

In Chapter 3 the theoretical framework of the study reviewing a collection of interrelated theories is presented. It also identified how curriculum theory can effectively guide curriculum implementation. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Freire's curriculum theory, critical theory and Tyler's theory. The literature study provides the conceptual framework covering concepts specifically, curriculum, curriculum factors and curriculum change.

## 3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is a particular way of addressing a topic (Matthews & Ross, 2010:34). This means that a theoretical framework provides a base which will be used to interpret the empirical findings of the study. In addition, it supports the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance and the research questions (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:12). The main purpose of this theoretical framework is to guide the interpretation of the empirical research regarding the key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance. Figure 3.1 was followed to explain the role of theory in research.

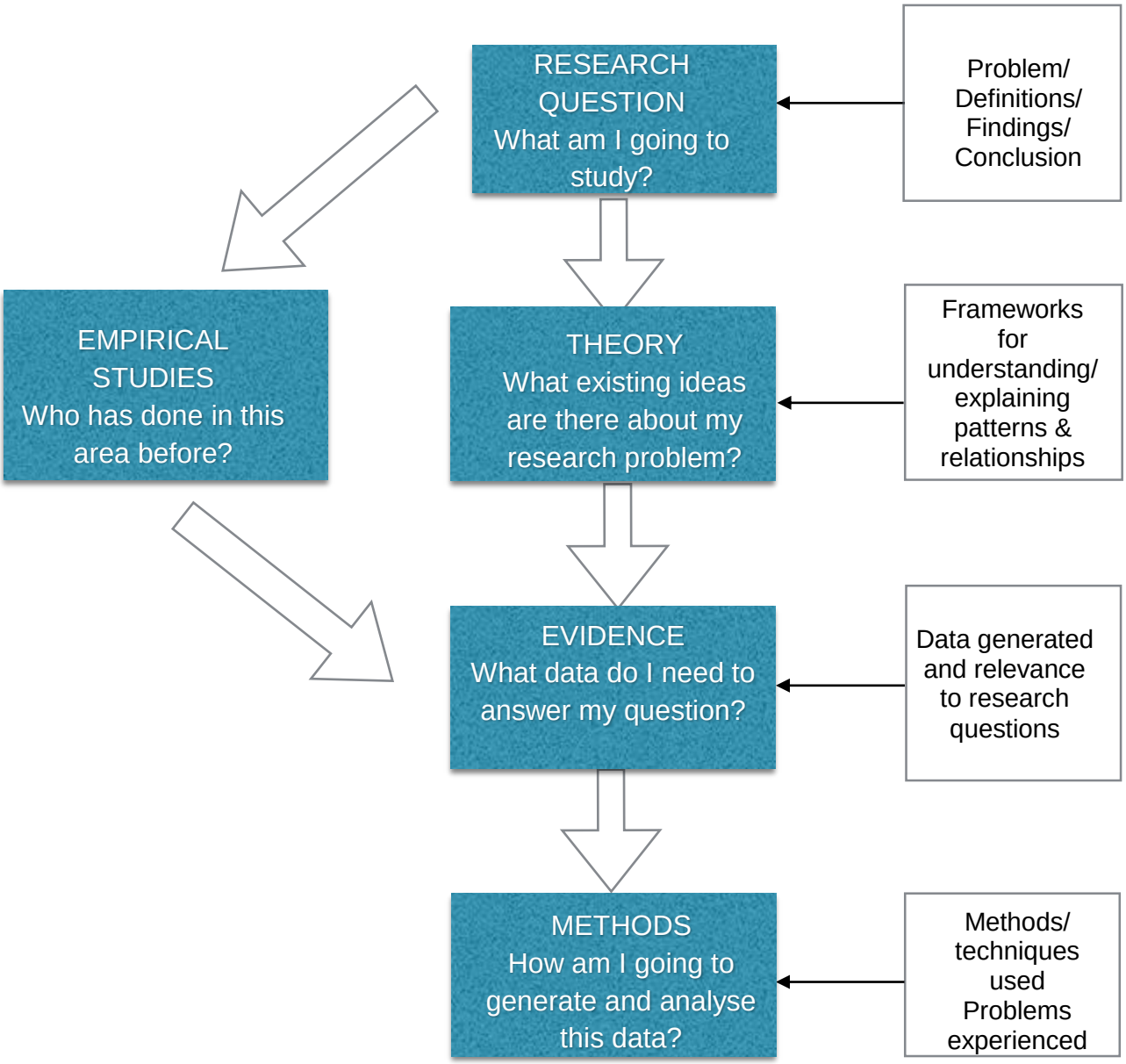


Figure 3.1: Role of theory in research (Sunday, n.d:16)

Figure 3.1 shows the research process that begins with the identification of the research questions. Based on the research questions, the framework is chosen. A literature review is conducted and empirical research supports the theory. Research findings would be a disorganised collection of data in the absence of theories because the researcher would not have overarching frameworks to which the data could be linked (Schunk, 2008:3). Theory can help design research questions, guide the selection of relevant data, interpret the data and propose explanations of the underlying causes of observed phenomena (Reeves, Mathieus, Kuper & Hodges, 2008:633). It provides the rationale for the study, defines the aim of the study and helps to address the research questions (Stewart & Klein, 2015:1).

Theory without experience is misguided because theory and practice affect one another (Schunk, 2008:23).

In addition, this theoretical framework looked at five core activities in curriculum development as a point of departure to guide curriculum implementers. The core activities in curriculum development include curriculum analysis, curriculum design, curriculum development, curriculum implementation and curriculum evaluation. Curriculum development is essential because it focuses on the improvement and innovation of education (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009:15). However, the key role of developing theory on curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance is essential as it permits deeper understanding of data and highlights the meaning of empirical data. Multiple theories give varying perspectives on the same issue; thus, each researcher must decide which lens to use to build an argument, establish the context of the problem and explain findings (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:24).

The theoretical framework which was applied to guide this study in order to analyse data was a combination of three curriculum theories. In this study, I tried to understand how can curriculum theory effectively guide curriculum implementers? The theoretical framework is constituted from the theoretical insights on Freire's theory, Critical theory and Tyler's theory. Freire's theory gives people the opportunity to develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves (Freire, 1972:28). Critical theory is linked with Freire's model because both are against the banking model which is against oppression of learners and empowers teachers and learners to communicate constantly to improve teaching and learning. Tyler was one of the curriculum thinkers who made it his aim to simplify and systematise the complex task of curriculum development by providing them with a clear step-by-step plan (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009:16).

These curriculum theories are subsequently presented in the next section.

### 3.2.1 Freire's curriculum theory

Freire's theory is based on the pedagogy of the oppressed which deals with the relationship between the teacher, learner and society.

Freire's theory rests on value assumptions of equality for all people, their right to knowledge and culture and their right to criticise their situation and act upon it (Nyirenda, 1996:6). In the same vein, the constitution of South Africa states that one of its aim is to heal the division

of the past and establish society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights (DBE, 2011a:3). His theory started from a deep love for and humility before poor and oppressed people and a respect for common sense (State University, 2017:1). He asserts that love encourages commitment, embodies struggle and pushes it beyond its source, therefore it is the oxygen of revolution (Ornstein, Pajak & Ornstein, 2011:29). Teaching is an act of love and teachers must love or have a passion for teaching (Swart, 2009:16).

In South Africa in 1948, the Nationalist Party (NP) was elected to power with a strong apartheid agenda which included the system of white supremacy aiming at providing the labour market with unskilled black workers (Du Plooy, Henkeman & Nyoka, 2014:3). Schools were divided into English and Afrikaans and learners were also separated according to race. The segregation of learners was extended to incorporate segregation on the basis of disability, schools that accommodated white disabled learners were mostly white while the few schools for black disabled learners were systematically under-resourced (DBE, 2009:9). The government was spending nine times more on each white learner than it spent on a black learner and black education were characterised by a shortage of schools, a lack of qualified teachers, high learner-teacher ratios and an inferior curriculum (StatSA, 2011:1). This was against all that Freire's theory stood for.

Freire argues that curriculum should provide learners with opportunities for growth using their own experiences as cornerstone in their development (Darwish, 2009:8). He describes the national curriculum authorising teachers to instruct and impose ideas on learners with prescribed knowledge (Saleh, 2013:91). This is what Bantu Education was all about: imposing ideas on learners as well as on teachers. These challenged us to take responsibility to build a humane and caring society for all South Africans (DBE, 2009:11). In 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) took over from the NP and formulated a policy based on democratisation, equalisation, desegregation and multicultural education (Steyn, et al., 2011:23). The curriculum was built on healing the divisions of the past, improving the quality of life for all citizens and laying the foundation of an open society in which the government is based on the will of people equally protected by law (DBE, 2009:iii).

A school curriculum is intended to provide learners with the knowledge and skills required to lead successful lives (Yasmin, Rafiq & Ashraf, 2013:1). The minimum standards of knowledge and skills that should be achieved at each grade are specified (DBE, 2011a:4). Learners are empowered because they can exercise their voices (Swart, 2009:15). Learners should be able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge and use the acquired

knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge (Macedo, 2005:19). All experiences including those of the teacher must be interrogated and the teacher is not neutral but intervenes in the educational situation in order to help the learners to learn to think critically (State University, 2017:1).

Freire's theory is against the banking model. The banking model refers to when education becomes simply the act of depositing knowledge in which the teacher is the depositor and the learners receive, memorise, repeat and store the deposits (Freire, 1972:21). This model was basically supportive of the apartheid era where teachers were told what to do and learners had to adapt without questioning anything. Only a slice of truth was presented to learners and learners did not construct knowledge based on their own expectations or even their own experiences (Swart, 2009:4). Freire criticises the banking model of education, which he labels as bourgeois (Nyirenda, 1996:13). In this conception of education, the teacher teaches and the learners are taught; the teacher know everything and the learners knows nothing; the teacher thinks and the learners are thought about; the teacher talks and the learners listen; the teacher disciplines and the learners are disciplined; the teacher chooses and enforces his/her choice and the learners comply; and the teacher is the subject of the learning process while the pupils are mere objects (Freire, 1972:22). As opposed to the banking model, Freire proposed a dialogical problem-posing method of education which invites the oppressed to explore their reality as a problem to the transformed (State University, 2017:2).

He emphasises that education should be a dialogue rather than a one-way lecture (Rugut & Osman, 2013:23). Dialogue is a means to develop a better comprehension about the object of knowledge (Macedo, 2005:12). Dialogue encourages learners to know how to think. Through dialogue, teachers and learners become jointly responsible (Freire, 1972:26). The acquired knowledge is simply reflected back by the learner in the same manner in which it was accumulated and thus encourage the learner to apply critical thinking (Swart, 2009:13). Active and critical learning approaches to learning are encouraged rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths (DBE, 2011b:4). Dialogue empowers learners to become aware of injustices and inequalities in their lives (Darwish, 2009:54). If learners become aware of injustices and inequalities, they will strive to work hard to redress the imbalances of the past and thus improve their performance. Learners need to be informed about their rights to education but responsibilities must also be critically emphasised. Dialogue improves relationships in the classroom and the school (Alvarez, 2014:341). People in a dialogue are able to hear differences offered by others and each participant

makes a unique contribution (Metcalfe & Game, 2015:7). Dialogue establishes patterns of interactions and a frame of investigation while encouraging learners to test their own understanding (Simon Fraser University, 2006:6). In this study, teachers interacted through focus group interviews to identify their perceptions, experiences and challenges with regard to the CAPS and curriculum factors affecting learner performance were identified. Freire's work has been very influential in critical education and he is responsible for several notions of critical theory (Randall & Allen-Brown, 1996:6). Freire's theory is linked with critical theory which is radically historicist and attempts to reconstruct education (Kellner, 2003:7). It is, therefore, necessary to discuss critical theory.

### 3.2.2 Critical theory

Critical theory is focused on the history, the development and practice of education and educational theorizing (Ward, 2015:1). It focuses on interrelated issues of technology, politics and social change (Freisen, 2008:1). It involves creating what education could be in order to change the society (Kellner, 2003:7). Curriculum in South Africa lays the foundation for a democratic and open society in which every citizen is protected by law (DBE, 2011a:3). Horkheimer (1972 as cited in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005:2) states that it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the factors to change it and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation. Curriculum factors affecting learner performance were discussed through focus group interviews and the advantages and the disadvantages of the CAPS were also identified (see Chapter 5, subsections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3).

Many learners experience barriers to learning or drop out primarily because of the inability of the system to recognise and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs typically through curricula, assessment, learning materials and instructional methodologies (DBE, 2009:24). Critical theories are concerned with equity and justice in relation to issues such as race, socio-economic status, religion and sexuality (Reeves, et al., 2008:633). This means all these values should be taken into consideration when designing a new curriculum and all learners from different backgrounds should be catered for.

Critical theory sees education as a tool used by oppressors along the lines of race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation (Oudshoorn, 2009:7). Critical teachers experience rage caused by the unjust circumstances that surround the educational experiences of the poor and marginalised people (Williams, 2006:1). Bantu Education teachers were oppressed and had to follow bureaucracy to perform their duties and were not allowed to think critically.

Critical theory generates alternative knowledge forms specifically those shaped by social interests that are fundamental to a democracy (Freisen, 2008:8). It promotes an ideology of education as an instrument of social transformation and as a means of attaining social cultural and economic equity (Ward, 2015:1). In 1997, C2005 was introduced to overcome the curricular divisions of the past (DBE, 2011a:3) (see Chapter 2, subsection 2.9.2).

C2005 was based on the principle of social transformation by ensuring that educational imbalances of the past are redressed and that equal opportunities are provided for all sections of the population (DBE, 2011a:4). Critical theory encourages teachers to be involved in curriculum design and implementation because it emphasises democracy, equity and justice. After all, teachers are the ones in the forefront and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. Their perceptions, challenges and experiences regarding the CAPS could be used in order to improve teaching and learning. Without the teachers, curriculum factors affecting learner performance cannot be identified. The HODs are the monitors of the curriculum so their input could be critical to the curriculum change.

Critical theory encourages teacher professional development to help teachers to make the necessary transition to a more viable pedagogical practice (Ward, 2015:7). Thorough and regular professional development will ensure effective teaching and learning. Teachers are expected to formulate activities that will attract learner's interest (Young, 1992:20). They must use different approaches to understand educational issues as they relate to race (Randall & Allen-Brown, 1996:9). Critical theory leads participants to develop a discourse of social transformation and emancipation beyond the walls of the classroom and the boundaries of the school to broader and cultural concerns (Abrams, 2004:7).

It is constructed by a vision of better reality which overcomes the present oppressive reality (Young, 1992:13). In this vein, it aims to transform and understand society as a whole. It digs beneath the surface of social life with the aim of uncovering the true understanding of how the world works (Crossman, 2017:1). Modern curricula theorists believe that the curriculum should be learner-centred, addressing the needs and interests of the learners (Alvior, 2014a:1). NCS Grades R-12 was introduced with the aim of equipping learners, irrespective of socio-economic background, race, gender, or intellectual ability with knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfillment and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country (DBE, 2011a:3) (Chapter 2, subsection 2.9.3). All teaching methods should actively involve learners if they are to construct meanings and if much learning is to take place (Ahmad, 2016:78).

The third theory, Tyler's theory, is presented next.

### 3.2.3 Tyler's theory

Tyler's model positions the school curriculum as a tool for improving community life where the needs and problems of the social environment are the main focus of the curriculum (Maheshwar, 2015:3). Curriculum focuses on changing issues such as technology (Freire, 1972:1). In 1995, the South African government began the process of developing a new curriculum for the school system based on the growth and development of knowledge and technology (DoE, 2009:2). In 2015, some public schools in Gauteng were supplied with smart boards as the department's e-learning initiative to ensure paperless classrooms. Teachers have been given laptops and learners received tablets (Krige, 2015:n.p.). Our learners are increasingly involved with technology and this could improve their interest in teaching and learning, although thorough monitoring is required at home and at school to ensure that learners are using it for educational purposes. Educational technology has become essential in learning and teaching but the consequences of introducing it into the classroom do not seem to have been considered to any great extent (Randall & Allen-Brown, 1996:1).

The old models of education are no longer appropriate. DBE (2011a:5) states that our curriculum aims to produce learners that are able to use technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others. However, Ward (2015:8) argues that our curriculum is not preparing learners with skills they will need to confront the difficulties they will face in life, and that learning material needs to be improved. Learners are now using technology to create subjects group chats and help one another with problems they experience. These chats sometimes even include the teacher who will monitor that the group chat is only subject-related. Technology can improve learners' social lives as well which, in turn, improves achievement in schools. I believe that if the tablets are only being given to Grade 12 learners, it could take time for them to adapt, and it would probably be better to introduce them in Grade 10. Tyler's model brings about significant changes in the learners' patterns of behaviour (Tyler, 1949:44).

Curriculum planning is the phase of curriculum development that allows the curriculum developer to make decisions and take actions to establish the plan that teachers and learners will carry out (Oliva, 2009:22). Tyler (2013:1) further states that in developing any curriculum plan of instruction, the following questions must be answered.

i) What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

Before we can determine the purpose of the school, we must first determine the educational purpose of the curriculum. The purpose of the curriculum is to equip learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitude that will enable them to participate meaningfully in society; provide access to higher education; facilitate the transition of learners from education institutions to the workplace; and provide employers with a sufficient estimation of a learner's competencies (UN, 2013:61). To put concepts into practice, teachers need resources and materials to facilitate their daily work (Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goulier & Panthier, 2015:93). Teachers must devote more time to the setting up and formulation of objectives (Tyler, 1949:62).

Many teachers should focus on teaching rather than first considering what the learner will need in order to achieve the learning goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:15). Learning will then be chosen with an emphasis on the prescribed learning content followed by an evaluative task to see whether the planned objectives have been achieved (Ewing, 2013:22). Tyler recommends that curriculum planners must identify general objectives by gathering data from learners' contemporary lives outside the school and align the information gathered with the subject matter (Oliva, 2009:128). He further states that we need to find out what kinds of interests learners have, what problems they encounter and what purposes they have in mind (Maheshwari, 2015:4). Schools are expected to determine their goals, and each subject teacher must then determine their objectives by setting targets for their subject, and the learners must determine what they are hoping to achieve for each task.

Once the first step of setting objectives is achieved, the selection and organisation of learning experiences as the means of achieving outcomes begins.

ii) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

For objectives to be attained, a learner must have learning experiences (Tyler, 1949:65). Learning experiences involve the interaction between the learner and the external conditions in the environment to which he responds (Tyler, 1949:18). Learning experiences should be meaningful and engaging so that learners become aware that they are learning because they are the ones who control what they learn (Ewing, 2013:26). Learning involves a demonstration of what one can do with those subjects, not just a regurgitation of knowledge (Tyler, 1949, as cited in Maheshwari, 2015:3). When designing learning experiences, we

must also take the needs of diverse learners into consideration (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:14).

Learning experiences are assessed primarily in terms of teacher's ability to implement the curriculum, and secondly in terms of learners' ability to learn from the curriculum (Schiro, 2013:54). In order to achieve the set targets, the teacher must organise learning activities which cater for all learners with different learning abilities. For example, the DBE has provided SSIP on Saturdays and during school holidays. From the researcher's experience, the residential camps and walk-in camps are also organised to cater for learners' capabilities. The schools are also expected to organise their own interventions after school.

Once a learning experience has taken place, the organisation of learning experiences commence.

iii) How can these educational experiences be effectively organised?

In 2017, the focus was on underachieving schools, schools with novice Grade 12 teachers and schools with high number of progressed learners (DBE, 2017b:4). The DBE also targeted interventions for high achievers to enhance the quality of their performance in the final examinations (ibid.). According to the researcher, there is too much focus on Grade 12 learners and other grades are being neglected. SSIP should not only be for Grade 12 learners because Grade 12 learning starts in Grade 10. CAPS provides a progression pathway from Grade 10 to Grade 12 based on learners' needs; therefore, to acquire the basics in Grade 10 in order to excel in Grade 12.

There is a need to slow down the pace of curriculum changes in order to allow the teachers, universities and national and provincial departments of education to work together towards a common understanding of what needs to be taught and learned (UMALUSI, 2014:8). Authorities must stop changing curriculum at will (Thivhavhudzi, 2012:10). Stability is needed in the South African curriculum by involving all stakeholders in developing an effective curriculum. The DBE could focus more on other factors impacting effective teaching and learning than merely focusing on curriculum change. Politicians should leave education to educational experts. According to the researcher, in South Africa it seems that each president appoints his own Minister of Basic Education, and each minister introduces a new curriculum. For example, President Mandela appointed Mr Bhengu who introduced the Senior Certificate; Mr Mbeki appointed Professor Asmal who introduced C2005; Mr Mbeki then appointed Mrs Pandor who introduced the NCS, and Mr Zuma split the department into

higher and basic education, and appointed Mrs Motshekga as the minister of basic education who introduced the CAPS.

All the different school systems that have improved significantly have done so primarily because they attracted more talented people to become teachers, they developed these teachers into better instructors and ensured that these instructors deliver consistently for every learner (McKinsey, 2007:60). Lovemore (2015:2) suggests that all teachers of Grades 1 to 6 and of Grade 9 should be required to write the Annual National Assessment test to measure their literacy and numeracy level and all Grade 12 teachers must write the examination paper their 2014 learners had to write as a competency test. If learners in primary school are placed with low performing teachers for several years in a row, it has negative impact on the learners which is largely irreversible (McKinsey, 2007:13).

iv) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

In Kenya, inadequate teacher training and support were the major reason why curriculum implementation was not successful (Omondi, 2014:18). In Nigeria, poor curriculum implementation was caused by the gap between policy makers and policy implementers and some facilitators lack the needed skills to ensure that the curriculum function effectively (Arthur & Athanasius, 2017:1). A study conducted in Thailand revealed that teachers who were trained had more knowledge and understanding (Omondi, 2014:19).

Teachers are the drivers of curriculum implementation because they adopt and implement the ideas and aspirations of the designers (Murava, 2017:3). Unless teachers are properly trained with a highly developed professional ethics, curriculum implementation will never be effective (Seale, 2012:4). Involving them will make them feel part of the curriculum development process and helps them own the process (Makunja, 2016:35).

According to Tyler (1949, as cited in Maheshwari, 2015:5), this question can be answered by matching initial expectations with the outcomes achieved by the learner. The school, the teachers and the learners will then assess whether the set objectives were achieved. It is imperative to look at the aim of the CAPS to determine whether these purposes are being attained. One of the aims of the CAPS identified according to Chapter 2, subsection 2.9.4 was to ensure that the learners enter higher education. Table 3.1 is evident that serious interventions are needed in order to improve the number of Grade 12 learners achieving university entrance.

Table 3.1: Grade 12 Learners Qualified to enter University from 2013-2017 (DBE, 2013b:64; 2015a:49; 2016a:2; 2017d:15)

| Year | No. Wrote | No. Failed | % Failed | No. achieved with bachelor's pass | % Achieved with bachelor's pass |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2013 | 562 112 | 122 333 | 21,8% | 171755 | 30,6% |
| 2014 | 532 860 | 128 986 | 24,2% | 150 752 | 28,3% |
| 2015 | 644 536 | 188 711 | 29,3% | 166 263 | 25,8% |
| 2016 | 610 178 | 199 817 | 32,7% | 151 830 | 28,9% |
| 2017 | 651 707 | 250 272 | 38,4% | 153610 | 23,6% |

According to Table 3.1, approximately 30% of Grade 12 learners are able to go to university, which is an indication that South African curriculum is failing to provide learners access to higher education. Approximately 70-80% of Grade 12 each year are unable to go to university. Another question that needs to be answered is what these learners are doing after completing Grade 12. This is an indication that Grade 12 learner performance is a problem in South Africa. South Africa seems to be focusing on quantity and not on quality because the promotion requirements do not allow learners entry to university.

Figure 3.2 shows the number of learners who wrote Grade 12 and the number of learners who achieved a bachelor's degree pass between 2013 and 2017.

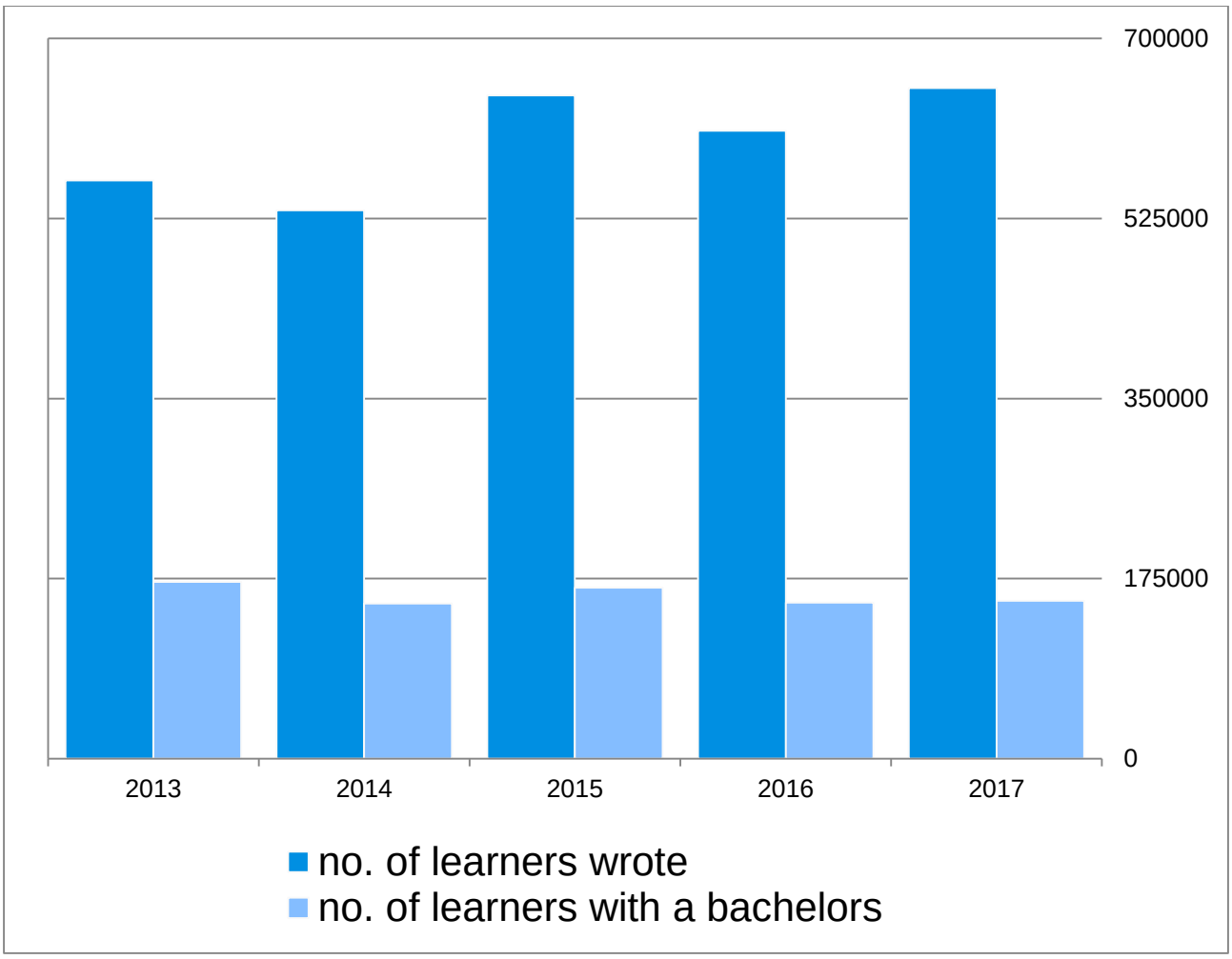


Figure 3.2: Grade 12 Learners Qualified to enter University from 2013-2017 (extracted from Table 3.1).

One of the aims of the CAPS is to provide learners access to the higher education (UN, 2013:61). However, according to Table 3.1, more learners in South Africa have completed their Grade 12 but only a few are able to go to university. This means that curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance need to be identified which will obviate the need for learners to register for a bridging course before they can be admitted to a university which is a waste of time and money (Rammala, 2009:4). After a curriculum review which was expected to address all the challenges of C2005, in 2013 only 30,6% of Grade 12 learners qualified to enter university, which is a drop of 1,5% from 2008 to a supposedly new improved NCS (DBE, 2013b:64). In 2014, only 28,3% of Grade 12 learners qualified to enter university (DBE, 2014a:3) while in 2015, only 25,8% of Grade 12 learners qualified (DBE, 2015b:49). In 2017 only 23,6% were able to enter university which is an indication that South African curriculum seems to be failing our youth and is slowly killing the South African economy. According to the DBE (2011b:16), the aim of the South African curriculum is to

ensure that learners acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. If only a few learners qualify to go to University after completing Grade 12, how can that be meaningful to their lives? Where does the major problem lie? Is it with curriculum itself, is it the teachers, the curriculum designers, the learners, the School Management Team (SMT), the principals, School Governing Body (SGB) or the parents? Teachers' perceptions, experiences and challenges remain critical to this study in order to improve Grade 12 learner performance.

The Schematic Summary of Theoretical Framework is presented next in figure 3.3.

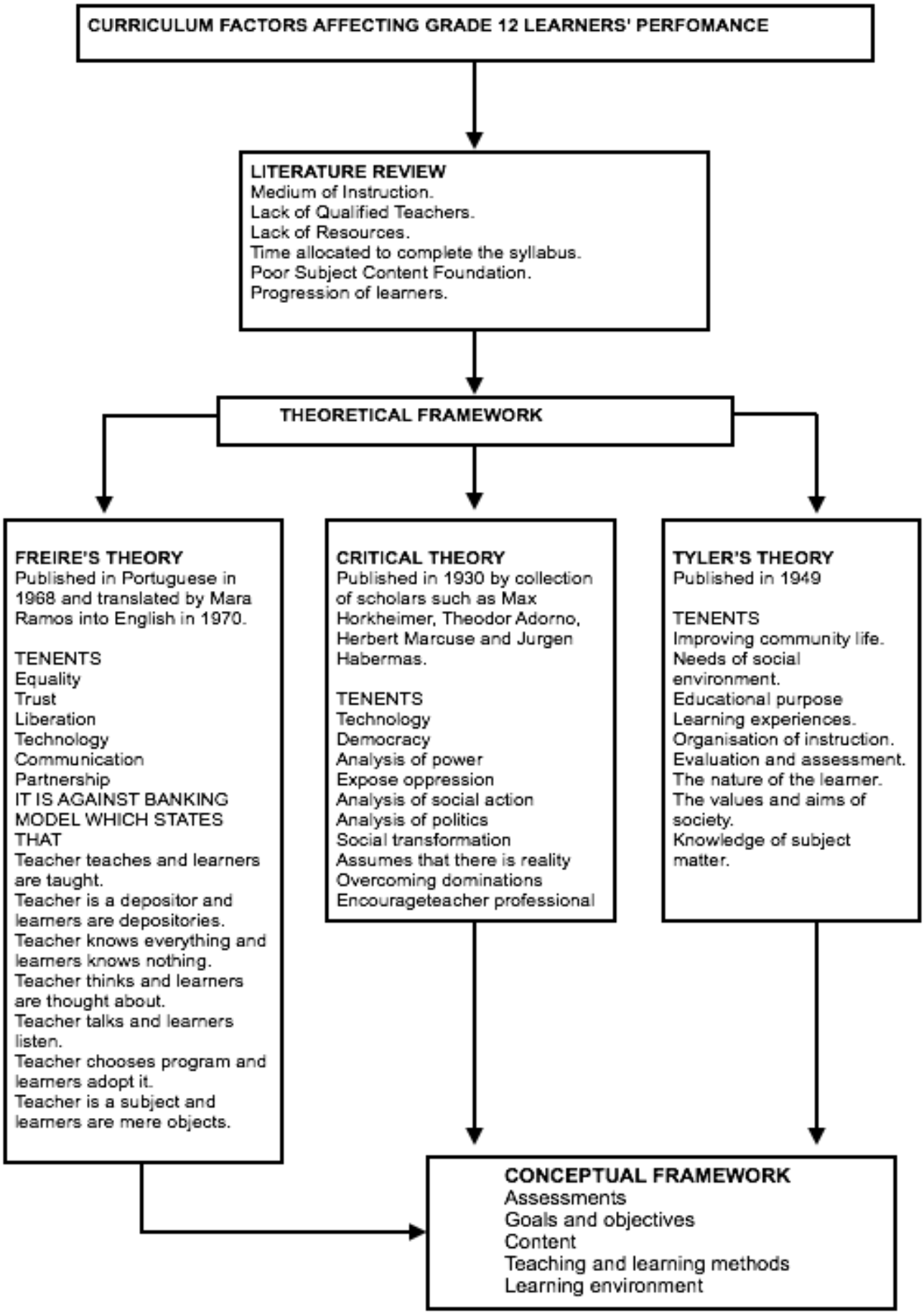


Figure 3.3 The Schematic Summary of Theoretical Framework

In the next section, the conceptual framework of the study is discussed, namely, curriculum, curriculum factors, curriculum activities and curriculum change.

## 3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework is an explanation of concepts that will be used to define and make sense of the data that flow from the research questions (Vaughan, 2008:22). It is used as a basis for reinterpreting existing concepts (Kumar, 2011:53). It is the researcher's understanding of how the research problem will be explored, the specific direction the research will have to take and the relationship between different variables in the study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:17).

### 3.3.1 Curriculum

Curriculum is a set of academic subjects intended to be learned by learners (Ewing, 2013:6). It is the heart of the education process which sets out what is to be learned, and how and when it is to be taught (DEVCO, 2014:2). It guides official documents articulating national policies and societal visions, educational planning and official or politically-sanctioned educational objectives (Houang & Schmidt, n.d.:3). Curriculum cannot be defined without linking it to concepts like society, culture, knowledge, arts and education (Haav, 2012:1). In other words, curriculum is determined by the aims of life and society because the aims of life and society are subject to constant change (Srivastava, 2013:4). According to (Stenhouse, 1974, as cited in Mesaric, Kuzic & Dovedan, 2011:357), a curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a way that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice. A curriculum is the offering of socially valued knowledge, skills and attitudes made available to learners through a variety of arrangements during the time they are at school (Adu & Ngibe, 2014:983).

The aim of a curriculum is to develop learners' full potential as active, responsible and fulfilled citizens who can play a constructive role in a democratic non-racist and equitable society. It focuses on an area of specialisation that supports the specified learning goals (Hung, Jonassen & Lui, 2008:486). It can be regarded as a checklist for desired outcomes (Su, 2012:154). The development of learners in totality should lead to a balanced personality so that they may be equipped with necessary life skills (Steyn, et al., 2011:104). Curriculum should be designed according to the knowledge and skills needed in the world economy

(Man & Waters, 2012:29). It is considered the heart of any learning institution, which means that schools, colleges and universities cannot exist without a curriculum (Alivor, 2014b:1).

For the purpose of this study, the CAPS curriculum is the base document. Teachers can link their subject knowledge, feelings, activities and symbolic knowledge with their skills (Haav, 2012:19). Each subject has its own ATP that teachers have to follow and need to integrate their subject knowledge with the contents. The body of knowledge of a curriculum is formed on the basis of desired knowledge, abilities and skills that a knowledge holder should possess (Mesaric, Kuzic & Dovedan, 2011:257). Each teacher is expected to possess subject content knowledge, certain skills and abilities. Theory is a very important component for teachers in order to achieve the desired results. There are three models of curricula that are found globally and in developing countries, namely, curriculum as a process, curriculum as a product and curriculum as praxis (Aynur, 2012:13). These models help curriculum designers to systematically and transparently map out the rationale for the use of particular teaching, learning and assessment approaches (O'Neill. 2010:2).

#### 3.3.1.1 Curriculum as a Process

Curriculum as a process is a way of expressing any educational idea that is testable in practice (Mesaric, Kuzic & Dovedan, 2011:257). It is what actually happens in the classroom and the extent to which teachers prepare lessons (Smith, 2000:6). Learners need to have a clear overview of what is to be learned (Aynur, 2012:12). The process is the interaction of learners, teachers and knowledge (Smith, 2000:4). Learners are not objects to be acted upon and the attention shifts from teaching to learning (Mednick, 2006:2). It involves all strategies to make sure that the given tasks are completed (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:347). Fotheringham, Strickland and Aitchison (2012:1) assert that it does not only concentrate on what is taught but also to the composite of academics, of learners themselves and of pedagogic approaches. In order to meet the needs of the learners and to allow them to learn in different ways, learning processes must be carefully organised (Gardner, 1991, as cited in Ewing, 2013:26). Each classroom consists of learners from different backgrounds and different learning abilities, who needs a teacher who is willing to go an extra mile in ensuring that the curriculum is understood by everyone. Teachers must use different teaching strategies to cater for all learners. Learners must be given more learning activities (O'Neill, 2010:2). According to the ATP, the number of minimum informal activities is specified, but teachers are allowed to do more depending on the calibre of the learners. These informal activities help the teacher to prepare learners appropriately. Once the learners become involved in the process of doing, they learn to ask questions, think and finally understand

how it works (Darwish, 2009:9). SBA activities are also done as a benchmark to evaluate whether learners understood the work and if the process was successful. This also determines what the barriers are and what revisions are needed.

3.3.1.2 Curriculum as a Product

The product is an outcome of the performance and the process that led to it (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:347). Product has been useful in developing and communicating transparent results to the learners (O'Neill, 2010:2). Smith (2000:4) says that objectives have to be set, a plan drawn up, then applied and the outcomes measured. Curriculum as a product model is heavily dependent on the setting of behavioural objectives (Smith, 2000:2). The syllabus has been drafted for the teachers, and the ATP was followed by the teachers and delivered to learners using different teaching methods to achieve the desired results. The plan is to put knowledge into practice and the results have to be measured. For the purpose of this study, the outcomes are measured according to the NPPPPR of the NCS Grade R-12. In order to measure the outcomes, things have to be broken down into smaller units (Mesaric, Kuzic & Dovedan, 2011:259). The results of the SBA are then used as a benchmark to identify learners who need additional support or expanded opportunities. One of the problems with the product model is that learners are generally left out of the picture (Mednick, 2006:2). The focus on pre-specified goals may lead both educators and learners to overlook learning that is occurring as a result of interactions, but which is not listed as an objective (Mesarick, Kuzic & Dovedan, 2011:359).

3.3.1.3 Curriculum as Praxis

Praxis is an extension and development of a curriculum as a process and product (Mesaric, Kuzic & Dovedan, 2011:259). It is a review of the syllabus, the process and the product to evaluate whether the desired results were achieved. It recognises the centrality of the curriculum in a sense that both the product and the process are the driving force supporting the delivery of institutional agendas and priorities (Fotheringham, Strickland & Aitchison, 2012:2). According to Smith (2000:10), it is an informed committed action. It is a commitment from the teacher and the learners to see how far they are willing to go to achieve the desired results if not achieved.

The teacher might be willing to give the learner an expanded opportunity but the learner might not attend. In this situation, the teacher will need to produce proof that the information for expanded opportunity was conveyed to the learner and the parent. For example, a letter informing the parent about the date and the time of expanded opportunity must be sent to

the parent and the parent must sign and send it back to the school. If the learner does not attend, a second letter is sent home to inform the parent that the learner did not attend therefore she or he will get zero for the task. This will demonstrate the commitment from the teacher, the parent and the learner. Firstly, this model holds that practice should not focus exclusively on individuals to create understandings and practices as well as meaning. Secondly, we could be looking at commitment expressed in action to the exploration of educators' values and their practice; and thirdly, we could expect practitioners committed to praxis to be exploring their practice with their peers (Mednick, 2006:4).

### 3.3.2 Curriculum Factors

Firstly, we need to understand the factors that are involved in curriculum transformation. Curriculum factors for this study will be discussed as stated in Chapter 1, subsection 1.4.2 and summarised in Figure 3.4.

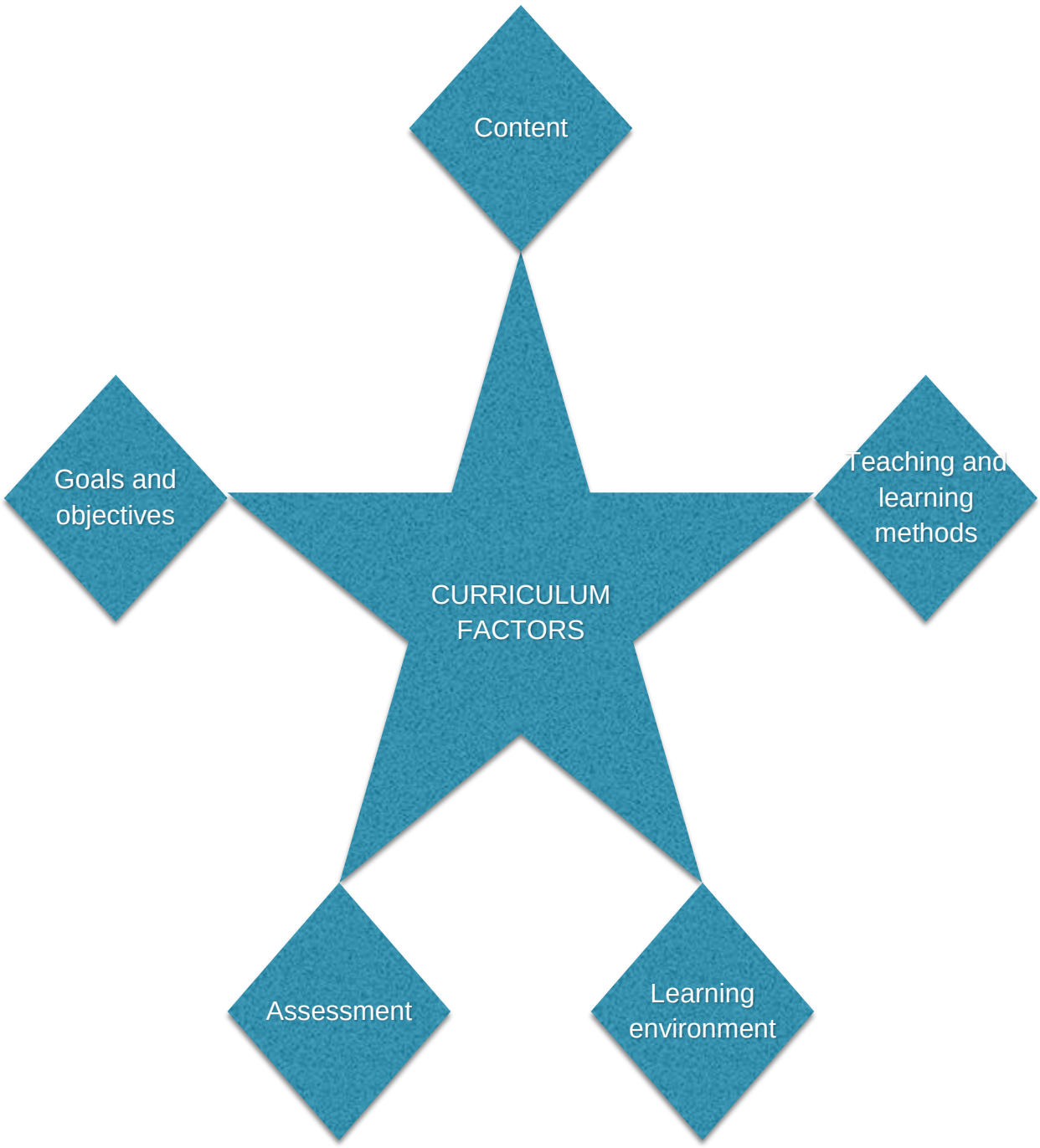


Figure 3.4: Curriculum Factors of the Study

3.3.2.1 Goals and Objectives

A goal is a plan of what needs to be done and objective is to determine whether there is a progress to achieve the goals set. Goals must be attainable and allow member of the organisation to relate to them in daily work (Wiles & Bondi, 2011:98). Goals includes formal, long-term goals such as stated content standards, district programme goals, departmental objectives and the desired results that establish priorities for instruction and assessment (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:58). The establishment of learning goals makes the learning

process more transparent and will help the teacher to track the learner's progress towards those goals (OECD, 2008a:8). Educational purpose gives the school a way to ensure that everyone involved conducts themselves according to the schools' intentions (Hlebowitsh, 2005:93). Schools should ensure that at the end of the whole process, all the new learning experiences will help to achieve the set goals (Man & Waters, 2012:171). Schools must specify in advance what they want to achieve and how they are going to achieve those objectives (Mednick, 2006:2). Identification of objectives is one of the key issues in the process of teaching and learning (Aynur, 2012:58).

#### 3.3.2.2 Content

Content includes knowledge, skills, values and understanding and identifies what the teachers are expected to teach and what the learners are expected to learn for a particular subject in a particular year (ACARA, 2012:5). To have the most effective results, the schools should focus on the content, methods and activities (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:14). Learning content should be structured in such a way that it promotes learner responsibility and contributes to democratic life (Ozel, Bayindir, Ungan, Arici, Bozkurt & Ozel, 2007:127). It is common sense that teachers need to know the subject matter they are to teach, but they must know more than that – they need to know how to teach the subject matter (Wan & Gut, 2011:122). Content should pay attention to the level of learner's performance, for example, the learning experience in one grade should be differrent from the learning experience in the next grade (Ewing, 2013:62).

Content and context of each grade must show progression from simple to complex (DBE, 2011a:4). Tasks should always be different from year to year to avoid a tendency to restrict teaching to those tasks thereby narrowing the content to be covered (Shermis & Di Vesta, 2011:130). Content must be focused to avoid the concept of "throw some content and activities against the wall and hope some of it sticks" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:15). The content must be structured in such a way that it allows teachers to be free to pursue instructional actions (Hlebowitsh, 2005:24). However, the CAPS curriculum treats content as neutral facts and not as constructions and interpretations, so that a teacher needs to adopt a critical approach to dealing with knowledge (Themane & Mamabolo, n.d.:1).

#### 3.3.2.3 Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching and learning methods are as important for the teacher as the actual purposes and the content (Ewing, 2013:25). Most teachers are using the ineffective lecture method which turns the learners into passive participants (Sundai & Sheriff, 2015:1052). Even though

learner-centered approach is the most effective method, I believe that it should be integrated with teacher-center approach. Since teaching and learning is a two-way process, both teaching and learning approaches are discussed next.

i) Direct Instruction

Direct instruction helps the learner to acquire organised knowledge authorised by a discipline (Schiro, 2013:50). It is the best teaching method because it is highly structured and teacher-centred (Killen, 2009:122). Its structure is rich in drilling and content and it provides constant interaction between the learner and the teacher (Lindsay, 2012:1). An advantage of this method is that information is presented in small steps so that one step can be mastered before moving to the next step (Price & Nelson, 2000:53). The teacher gains learners' attention and can closely monitor their understanding (Rose, 2006:14). The teacher retains full control of the classroom and its activities and the classroom remains orderly (Concordia University, 2017:1).

Teachers must motivate the learners to participate in the class for this method to be successful (Senin, 2010:1). They can only do that when good planning has been involved and highlights important information through explicit instructions (CAST, 2011:2). Teachers must get to know the learners and monitor how close they are from reaching the level of ability they need to succeed in the next class (Kennedy, 2015:1). Teachers must prepare thoroughly on a daily basis (Mayflor, 2012:1). This method allows for learners' uniqueness, reduces competitiveness, promotes peer interaction and conveys a sense of nurturing and caring (Pearson Education, 2010:1).

All skills must also be presented in a way that allows learners to answer questions, issue directions and be able to reason (Engelmann, 1999:78). The content or skill to be learned, the pace and the rhythm of the lesson are the responsibility of the teacher (Rose, 2006:14). Regarding the relevance of the content, teachers must craft explanations that enable learners to understand the material which involves knowing what the learners understand and then make connection between what is new and what is known (Weimer, 2009:1). At the end of the lesson the learners should be able to demonstrate their new skill or knowledge independently without help from anyone (Price & Nelson, 2000:53).

ii) Learning methods

How children learn is linked to what learners learn, the knowledge learners construct and meanings that they comprehend (Schiro, 2013:118). A learner-centred approach focuses

on providing quality education for all learners and it is consistent with the new international approach (DBE, 2009:20). The learner-centred approach for this study uses problem-based learning (PBL) and self-directed learning (SDL) because they are effective strategies to overcome the banking concept and make learners become critical thinkers (Freire, 1972:26). These approaches are discussed next.

a) Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

In this approach, learners are presented with a problem, and are then expected to identify what they know, learn it and apply the knowledge they have acquired to solve the problem (Hansen, 2006:222). Learners are obliged to respond to challenges as they are always posed with questions relating to themselves in the world (Freire, 1972:27). Questions such as what information is important? What information is missing? which formulas are necessary? and what is the first thing to do? (ibid.). Problem-Based Learning helps learners to focus their attention on important aspects of the task and guides their thinking (Schunk, 2008:200).

The process involves learners in groups of five to eight attempting to define and reason through the problem. They set learning goals; individuals complete their learning assignments by collecting the resources and presenting reports to the group; they discuss their findings with the group and revisit the problem; and, at the end of the learning period (usually a week), they summarise and integrate their learning (Hung, Jonassen & Lui, 2008:489). Edmonds, Edmonds and Mulig (2003:231) argue that learners might complain that they do everything themselves and the teacher never teaches, but Freire (1972:27) emphasises that this approach encourages learners and teachers to create conditions together under which knowledge can be acquired. Learners become aware of new ways in which knowledge is acquired by working together (Schunk, 2008:401).

Hung, Jonassen and Lui (2008:489) state that it is the most innovative instructional method implemented in the history of education and responds to the criticism that traditional teaching and learning methods fail to prepare learners to solve problems. It is a more challenging, motivating and enjoyable approach to education (Norman & Schmidt, 2000:727). Learners are obliged to solve problems and, in the process, they become creative thinkers, problem solvers and risk takers (Ahmad, 2016:80). Learners exposed to a PBL are in control of their learning, display greater enthusiasm and they ask more questions (Shokar, Navkiran, Shokar, Romero & Bulik, 2002:200). The main goal of PBL is to educate learners to be self-

directed and lifelong learners (Hung, Jonassen & Lui, 2008:492). Learners are encouraged to use self-directed learning skills (Kilroy, 2004:413). This is discussed next.

b) Self-Directed Learning

Self-Directed Leaning is when the learner takes the initiative to pursue the learning experience (Skiff, 2009:1). Once the initiative is taken, the learner assumes complete responsibility and accountability for defining the learning and following it through to its conclusion although they are supervised by the teacher (Skiff, 2009:1). The ability to direct and regulate one's own learning is crucial for success (Shokar, et al., 2002:197). Learners are more interested in learning activities when they can interact with one another (Concordia University, 2017:1). It empowers and enables them to participate actively and critically in the learning process to overcome the causes of learning difficulties (DoE, 2009:20). It engages learners in hard, messy activities and encourages them to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it (Weimer, 2013:1).

Self-directed learners are usually determined to achieve their goals (Benson, 2003:26). It removes mastery from the teacher and allows learners to be masters too (Kennedy, 2015:1). The teacher creates opportunities for discussion and provides learners with learning materials (Rothwell, 2009:1). It remains the responsibility of the teacher to make sure that learners are ready for SDL. The teacher must organise the learners, and make sure that they are disciplined and that they will be able to communicate effectively. Each subject teacher is responsible for setting clear goals and time frames for each task and for making sure that the learners know exactly what is expected of them.

3.3.2.4 Assessment

Assessment is a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information to help all the stakeholders to see the progress of the learner (DBE, 2011b:3). It identifies what the learners know and are able to do (Derrell, 2015:2). Different stakeholders use this evidence to judge the appropriateness of the assessment used (O'Neill, 2015:73). This information helps the teacher to understand what learners know and understand, what their learning experiences enable them to do and what their skills are and personal capabilities are (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment, 2014:1). All teachers across the grades need to have a strong knowledge of how to administer classroom assessments and how to use the information these assessments provide (Derell, 2015:2). Teachers' professional ability to use a range of assessment methods is a starting point for quality

assessment that produce accurate results (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment, 2014:1).

Performance of learners in secondary schools can improve through effective assessment strategies are implemented (Baloyi, 2008:1). In South Africa, common assessment tasks and examinations are written. The purpose of common assessment is to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure that common standards are applied across grades and subjects (DBE, 2015f:1). It is an important element in educational planning and teaching because accurate evidence of learners learning is gathered (Kelting-Gibson, 2013:41). This evidence helps all the stakeholders make decisions about future plans for learning (Ewing, 2013:12). It also helps to discover what a learner has learned from experience (Man & Waters, 2012:160).

The most significant factors to consider in assessment are the targets of instruction and the outcome to be achieved (Shermis & Di Vesta, 2011:34). The purpose of assessment is to enhance learning (Ewing, 2013:55). Assessment should therefore be developmental rather than mere grading (Swart, 2009:27). It is important to have clear standards that provide direction and specific performance goals for the school (Odden, 2009:144). Teachers must ensure that learners understand exactly what is expected of them before the assessment (Kelting-Gibson, 2013:42). This involves explaining to them the knowledge and skills required and the required length of responses (DBE, 2011a:3). Curriculum designers must determine the qualities and skills necessary for proper achievement (Kelting-Gibson, 2013:42). Assessment is explained further in Figure 3.5.

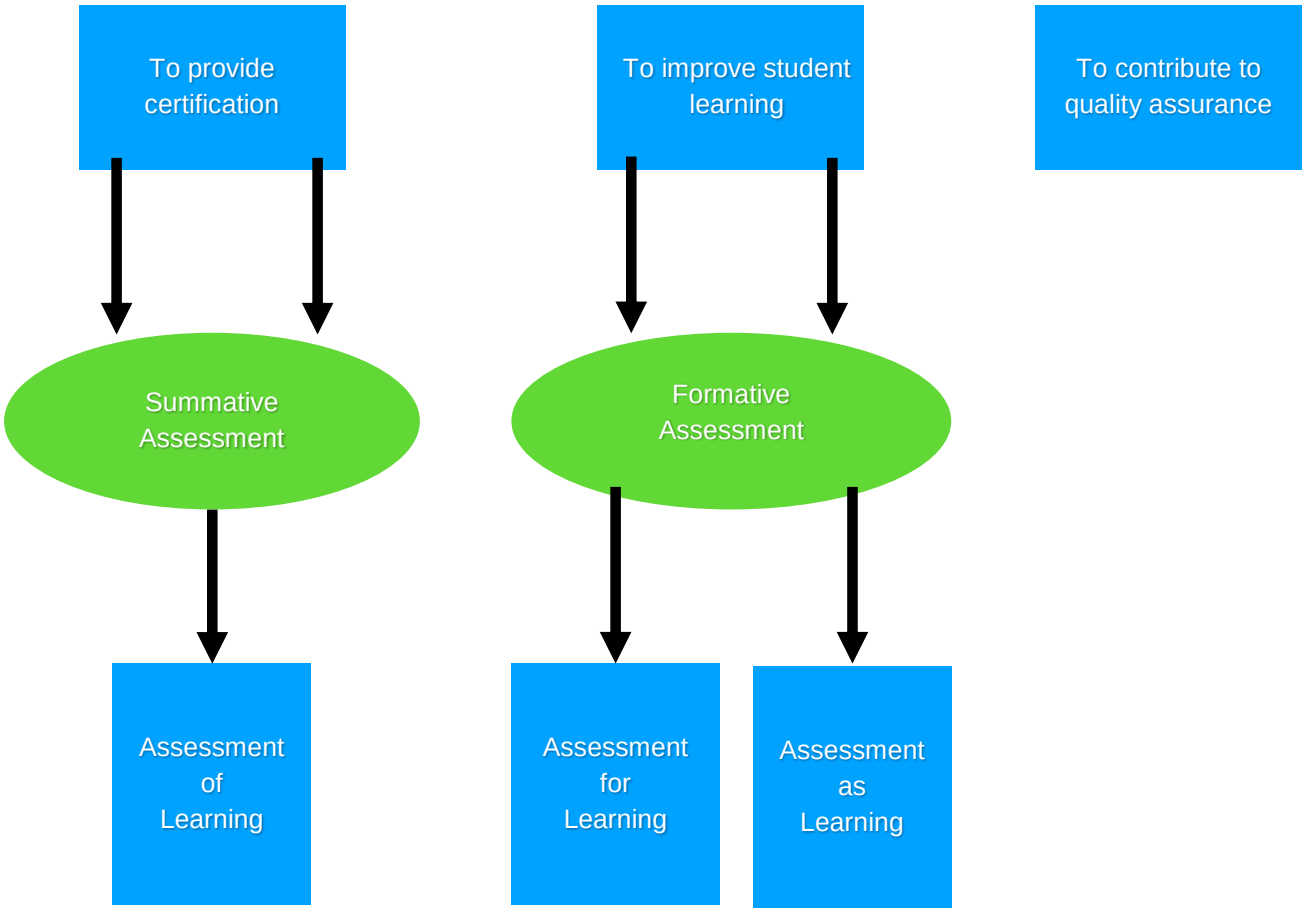


Figure 3.5: The Language of Assessment (O'Neill, 2015:74)

Figure 3.5 indicates that there are two types of assessment, namely summative assessment and formative assessment.

i) Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is used to measure what learners have learned at the end of every topic to ensure that they have met the required standards to gain access to further education or to enter certain occupations (OECD, 2008b:1). This is regarded as assessment of learning which provides certification for school completion (O'Neill, 2015:75). Summative assessment is used to acknowledge, record and report on learners' overall achievement at the end of the learning sequence at a given time (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment, [CCEA], 2014:2). It is not administered as often as formative assessment and it covers a wide body of skills and knowledge (Derrell, 2015:2). It is more product-orientated and assesses the final product whereas formative assessment focuses on the process involved in completing the product (Northern Illinois University, 2011:3). The DBE is more focused on the final product, namely Grade 12s, and appears to neglect other

grades. Secondary School Improvement Programme classes are organised only for Grade 12s every Saturday and during school holidays the learners go on camps.

Formal or summative assessment is regarded as assessment of learning which provides a teacher with a systematic way of evaluating how all learners are progressing in a particular subject and in a grade (DBE, 2011a:3). An example of summative assessment is an examination or a project, once the project has already been completed, no further revision can be made (Northern Illinois University, 2011:3). All formal assessment tasks including examinations conducted by the school throughout the year on a continuous basis are regarded as SBA (DoE, 2011a:x).

Several countries such as Finland, Hong Kong, Australia and others have implemented SBA for many years because it decreases the examination pressure from learners and emphasise on learner-centered approaches (Siti, Sharifah, Rahman, Sujak, Saravanan, Maniam, Sharifah, Ching & Bathumalai, 2015:3). In Malaysia they also appreciate the move to a more relaxed and examination free (Mansor, et al., 2013:105). Johnson and Burdett (2008:27-28) identify that weaknesses of SBA are that SBA's focus is on assessment not learning; teachers continue to use a transmissivity pedagogy leading to learners focusing on route responses rather than transferable skills; teachers find it difficult to make accurate assessments of learners' work; it narrows educational outcomes and it leads to disinterest and low morale. Mansor, Leng, Rasul, Raof, Malaysia & Malaysia (2013:104) note that most of Malaysian teachers are far from ready to implement the SBA and that they have not yet grasp the concept. Siti, et al., (2015) state that when learners are absent the skill for that day need to be repeated so that absent learners are not left behind. Mansor, et al., (2013:4) state that in Hong Kong 25% is based on SBA, paper 1 is 30%, paper 2 is 20% and paper 3 is 25%.

In South Africa, the SBA consist of 25% and examination counts 75% for Grade 10-12 as per table 3.2. The SBAs are set by the DBE and are administered at schools under controlled conditions. Themane and Mamabolo (s.a.:9) argue that the manner in which assessment is planned put more emphasis on a standardised and centralised approach. If a learner is absent on the day the SBA is written, they get the opportunity to write the same task which is advantageous for them because they get to know what to expect from the SBA. If a learner is pregnant or suspended, they send someone to collect the SBA from the school and write at the comfort of their own zone without being supervised which gives them a greater privilege than others. Most SBAs are research-based, I believe it gives the learners an

opportunity to score better marks, and, when it comes to controlled tests or examinations, they score below average. Moreover, the DBE emphasises that there should not be a variance of more than 10% between the test or examination and the task which is unrealistic because the most of the tasks are research-based. The SBA component in South Africa in the different school phases is indicated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: SBA percentages (DBE, 2011a:5)

| **PHASE** | **SBA COMPONENT %** | **END-OF-YEAR EXAMINATION %** |
|---|---|---|
| Foundation Phase | 100 | 0 |
| Intermediate Phase | 75 | 25 |
| Senior Phase | 40 | 60 |
| Further Education and Training Phase | 25 | 75 |

According to Table 3.2, learners in the Foundation Phase are not exposed to examinations. The examination starts only in the Intermediate Phase 25%, Senior Phase 60% and 75% in the FET phase. Learners in South Africa are not exposed to examinations at an early age. The culture of examinations is not instilled early in the years and as a result they see the examinations as a monster when they get to secondary school. Learners in the Foundation Phase, the Intermediate Phase and the Senior Phase are promoted to the next grade even without writing examination because, according to Table 3.2, examinations comprise a small percentage. Previously, there was an exit examination for each phase, for example, Standard 4, now called Grade 6 and Standard 7, now called Grade 9. The CAPS requires less frequent assessment and, in some subjects, only two assessment tasks are needed (Du Plessis & Marais, 2015:8). The CAPS is assessment-based so assessment should be up to standard because it is the main focus. Levels of competence for assessments have been described for all the subjects according to the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12. Their corresponding percentage bands are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Scale of Achievement for the CAPS Grade 10-12 (DBE, 2011b:23)

| ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL | ACHIEVEMENT DESCRIPTION | MARKS% |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | Outstanding achievement | 80-100 |
| 6 | Meritorious achievement | 70-79 |
| 5 | Substantial achievement | 60-69 |
| 4 | Adequate achievement | 50-59 |
| 3 | Moderate achievement | 40-49 |
| 2 | Elementary achievement | 30-39 |
| 1 | Not achieved | 0-29 |

According to Table 3.3, 30% is regarded as a pass except for Home Language which requires a 40% pass. This scale of achievement is still the same from 2011 to date. The pass percentage is very low and does not encourage learners to work hard. If assessment is done thoroughly, it will contribute to quality assurance and there will be no need to set pass percentages very low. Moreover, a 30% pass does not qualify learners for entry to university.

ii) Formative Assessment

Formative assessment provides important information on what the learners understand and what they do not, as a result, it improves learning (Watanabe-Crockett, 2016:1). It consists of assessment of learning which focuses on feedback and assessment of learning which focuses on assessment that helps learners to self-monitor (O'Neill, 2015:75). It is important to identify what instructional methods, learning tasks and learning context you will use to achieve your targets (Shermis & Di Vesta, 2011:35). Both formal and informal assessment is used to interpret information about a learner's progress and the effectiveness of the teacher (Ewing, 2013:55). Daily assessment using various forms of assessment to monitor the learner's achievement is regarded as informal assessment. Informal or daily assessment may be as simple as a teacher stopping during the lesson to observe learners or to discuss with learners how learning is progressing in order to close the gaps in learners' knowledge and skills and improve teaching (DBE, 2011a:3).

Formative assessment includes a range of formal and informal assessment procedures used by the teachers during teaching and learning processes to enhance learner

achievement (CCEA, 2014:2). Informal assessment is regarded as assessment for learning and is daily assessment done through teacher observation and teacher-learner interactions to monitor learners progress (DBE, 2011a:3). Most informal assessments are valuable but rarely captured in documentation (O'Neil, 2015:101). Formative assessment focuses on providing feedback for teachers and learners and is intended to support the learning process rather than measure an outcome; for example, multiple choice, short answer and written responses (Derrell, 2015:2). It measures the progress of learners but can also assess the teachers' progress; for example, when a teacher introduces an activity in class, he or she can determine through observation whether or not the activity should be used again (Northern Illinois University, 2011:2). It helps the teacher to identify concepts that learner is struggling with (OECD, 2008b:1). Its primary focus is to identify areas that need improvement (Northern Illinois University, 2011:2).

It is also important to think about assessment tasks and measures (Shermis & Di Vesta, 2011:35). Assessment tasks must effectively engage the learners so that they will undertake the task with enthusiasm (Ewing, 2013:61). The assessment tasks should be carefully designed to cover the content of the subject, should ensure that a variety of skills is assessed, and should be appropriate to the age and developmental level of the learners in the phase (DBE, 2011a:3). The assessment should therefore not be concerned with grading but should rather be developmental (Swart, 2009:27).

#### 3.3.2.5 Learning Environment

Schools are the testing ground for the successes or failures of learners; therefore, a caring environment in the school leads to attainment of good education which is associated with good outcomes (Rammala, 2009:4). One of the major challenges is the creation of a learning environment that promotes high-quality learning (Byrne, Finlayson, Flood, Lyons & Willis, 2010:1). The school is regarded as a second home for the learners, and efforts should be made to make sure that they feel as comfortable as possible. The learning environment of the classroom is set by the teacher and is deliberately arranged in order to accomplish a specific purpose (Schiro, 2013:120). The environment sets a tone for learning, and what learners feel about the spaces that they occupy causes them to behave in certain ways (Wiles & Bondi, 2011:46). When learners have positive experiences that are self-enhancing, their perception and understanding of themselves change (Wiles & Bondi, 2011:28). Creating an effective learning environment involves organising activities, instruction and the

physical classroom to provide for effective use of time, to create a happy, productive learning environment and to minimise disruptions (Slavin, 2009:329).

National and international research reveals that learners gain positive knowledge and skills through effective learning activities in a classroom that is conducive to learning (Epri, 2016:96). Teachers must create a learning environment in which learners are fully involved and immersed (Kahveci & Ay, 2008:125). If an environment is supportive, empowering and challenging, all learners can comprehend more effectively (Caine, 2008:11). Brickner and Etter (2008:89) state that in order to increase the learner's interest, participation and satisfaction, teachers must create a supportive classroom environment. The brain develops well if the environment is stimulating (Schunk, 2008:387). To help learners improve academically, they need a learning environment that is conducive to learning (Wan & Gut, 2011:47). If they are provided with good knowledge and skills, they should be able to contribute effectively to the development of the country (Muhammad, et al., 2011:45).

Curriculum evaluation is also one of the curriculum factors affecting learner performance and is discussed in the next section as one of the core curricular activities in curriculum development.

### 3.3.3 Core Curricular Activities in Curriculum Development

Designing curriculum activities means putting plans in place to ensure effective teaching and learning (Du Preez & Simmonds, 2014:4). Curriculum is effective if maximum output is obtained from a given input (UN, 2013:27). An effective curriculum provides teachers, learners, administrators and community stakeholders with a measurable plan and structure for delivering quality education (Glenn, 2017:1). The Minister of Basic Education admitted that there is a skills gap where most learners cannot measure up to the international standards (News24, 2014:2). UMALUSI revealed that the challenge in the South African curriculum lies less in the quality of the curriculum than in its translation into the classroom context (UMALUSI, 2014:17). They add that even if SA has a good curriculum, if the country does not have well-educated teachers who are prepared to teach, good textbooks and other resources in schools that are well-managed, problems can still be expected (ibid.).

Tyler (1949:3) states that in order to accomplish educational plans, objectives must be set. These objectives provide the guidelines for which materials to select, define the content, and show how to develop instructional procedures and how to prepare tests and examinations (Tyler, 2013:3). They give direction to the learning experiences that learners encounter and provide a vehicle for ordering those learning experiences (Oliva, 2009:22).

Curriculum development is scientifically driven and is aimed at making rational decisions to achieve the end result (Tyler, 2013:61). The different curriculum activities are viewed as an ongoing process within teaching and learning activities (Su, 2012:154). This study relates to the next core activities as indicated in Figure 3.6:

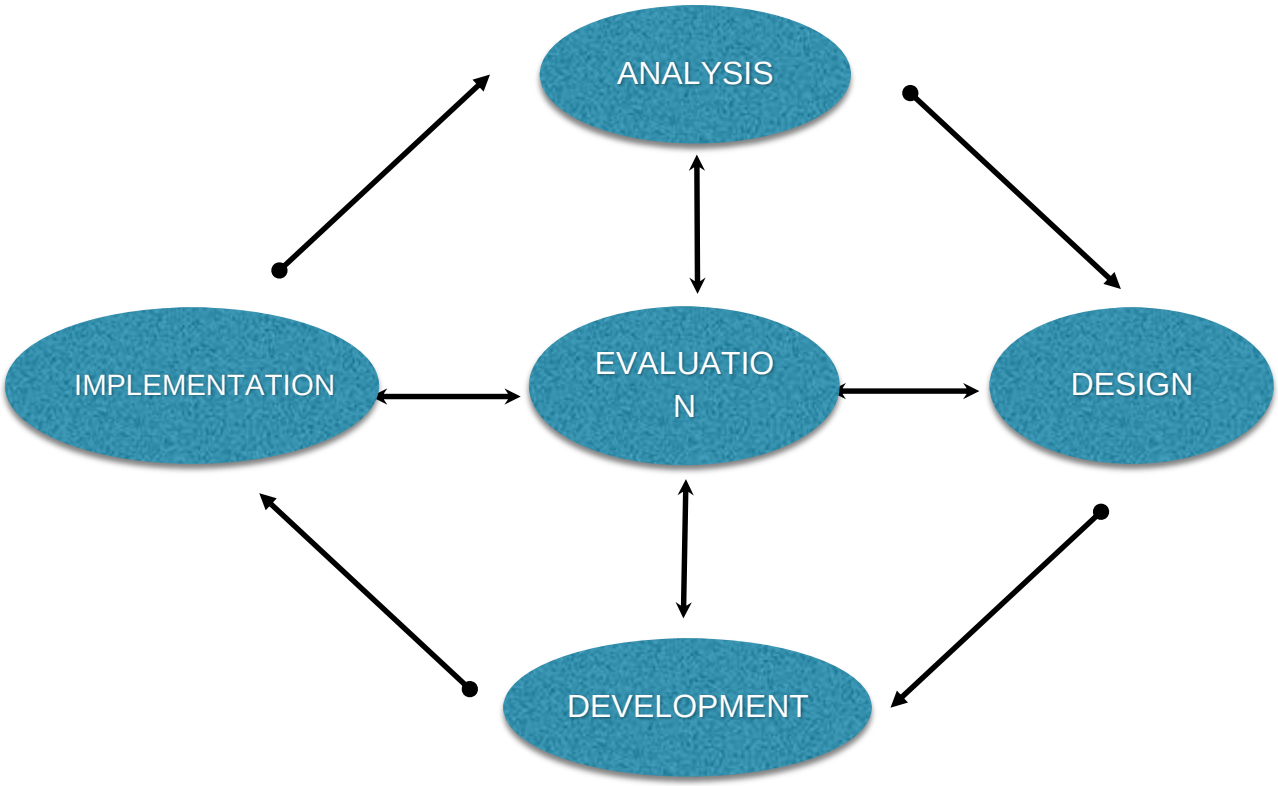


Figure 3.6: Curricular Activities (Adapted from Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009:15)

Through analysis, design, implementation and evaluation, curriculum developers set goals, plan experiences, select content and assess outcomes of school programmes (Wiles & Bondi, 2011:5). The cyclical curricular activities often start with an analysis of the existing system and formulation of intentions for the proposed change (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009:15).

3.3.3.1 Curriculum Analysis

Curriculum analysis is the study of how the curriculum structures learners' experiences in schools (Houang & Schmidt, 2008:2). It involves unpacking the curriculum in order to understand the plan, evaluates how the parts are connected to each other, checks the underlying beliefs and seeks justification for choices of curricula (Jansen & Reddy, n.d.:4). The purpose of analysis is to gain an understanding of the existing situation and to decide

on how to improve it by specifying the desired features of the design and how these can be developed (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009:42). DEVCO (2014:9) states that it is important to take the following questions into consideration in order to analyse the curriculum, namely:

a) Is the curriculum fit for the purpose?

b) Who learns and who does not?

c) Who does what and how?

d) What do key stakeholders feel about the curriculum? and

e) What is the cost of reform?

Teachers must be able to explain, interpret, apply, empathise, have perspective and self-knowledge in order to show that they truly understand curriculum (Wiggings & McTighe, 2005:15). Newberry & Kueker (2008:5) identified four primary focus points of analysis as follows:

i) Intended curriculum: Analysis is concerned with scrutinising the content and the performance expectations to check whether the learners know and use the material created.

ii) Enacted curriculum: Analysis is concerned with scrutinising the content and the performance expectations as approved by the teacher in the classroom and in the learning contexts.

iii) Assessed curriculum: Analysis is concerned with scrutinising the content and the performance expectations based on the questions and performance tasks contained in the assessment materials.

- Learner curriculum: Analysis is concerned with measuring the content and levels at which learners enact the performance expectations in a targeted context.

After scrutinising the curriculum and understanding performance expectations, curriculum design begins.

3.3.3.2 Curriculum Design

Curriculum design is based on decisions about the philosophy and aim of education (Yezdan, 2013:1). According to Srivastava (2013:19), curriculum design involves analysis of social needs, translating the needs into objectives, splitting the objectives into specific

objects, grouping specific objectives into subjects and specification of the required time and syllabus formulation. It ensures that the experiences will enhance effective teaching and learning (Man & Waters, 2012:160). Tyler (1949:46) states that curriculum design must state clearly our educational purpose, how far we are willing to go in order to achieve it, activities that will be used, effective methods that will be used and the device we will use to evaluate what we have planned. It is important to get the right structure in place to ensure appropriate oversight and coordination (DEVCO, 2014:11). The process of curriculum design must look at those elements that are common across subjects; then links can be made at each of the three levels of knowledge: content, skills and conceptual understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:87). Key elements of curriculum design are setting objectives in terms of learning, organising learning to achieve this and to checking whether we have been successful (Man & Waters, 2012:158). Wiggins and McTighe (2005:13) further state that teacher as designers are constrained because they are guided by national state, district or institutional standards that specify what learners should know and be able to do. After setting objectives and organising learning, the development of a curriculum begins.

3.3.3.3 Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is a process where the choice of designing a learning experience for learners is made and then activated through a series of coordinated activities (Wiles & Bondi, 2011:2). As knowledge becomes obsolete due to developments in science and technology, there is a need for constant review of the curriculum development process (Arthur & Athanasius, 2017:4). Curriculum development defines the details of what is to be taught, how and when (DEVCO, 2014:14).

Some countries are seeking to involve the wider community to develop a curriculum that is appropriate to learners' stages of development and that promotes continuity across pre-primary, primary and on into secondary education (Pepper, 2008:3). In Australia, for example, there is a need to develop a national curriculum to address population mobility within the nation which will replace the variety of matriculation credentials developed and managed by the eight different State Education Departments (Doherty, 2009:1). Criteria used to judge quality of the curriculum in Australia include whether the curriculum is clear about what is to be taught across the years, whether the curriculum is flexible enough, whether the curriculum specifies what all young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling, whether the curriculum is concise and expressed in plain language and lastly, whether the curriculum is established on a strong evidence base (ACARA, 2012:8).

In New Zealand, personalisation of the curriculum plays an important role in tackling disparities in attainment and in Scotland, relevance and personalisation and choice are two of the principles of curriculum development (Pepper, 2008:7). Both New Zealand's and Scotland's curricula for excellence place a strong emphasis on the importance of acquiring knowledge, but they are less clear in specifying what knowledge is to be acquired or the processes that the practitioners might follow in order to specify such knowledge (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014:10). In the US, the national curriculum offers benefits such as a shared expectation, with a wider focus than the state standards (Porter, McMaken, Hwang & Yang, 2012:104). In the Netherlands, curriculum development no longer focuses on an academic discipline as a starting point but has been replaced by the competencies needed for employment and whether the learners will be able to participate in society (Wesselink, 2010:12).

Needs analysis is the starting point for any curriculum development which is to collect data about the curriculum from learners, teachers and administrators (Aynur, 2012:54). Themes should be used to address social, economic and political issues in order to develop a curriculum (Du Preeze & Simmonds, 2014:5). This process should increase the ability of the learners to grow spiritually and develop emotional maturity and academic excellence (Du Preez, 2014:2). It focuses on the improvement of education (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009:15). If the education improves, the country's economy also improves (Alvior, 2014:3). It aims at bringing into reality anticipated changes (Tshiredo, 2013:12). The first step in curriculum development is to establish specific activities and criteria related to the objectives, and the last step allows teachers to establish how far learners will go each year in attaining the objectives (Kelting-Gibson, 2013:42). In other words, they are able to adapt the curriculum according to the goals and the mission of the school (Maheshwari, 2015:4).

Curriculum development must develop the capacity for high-quality lifelong learning (Man & Water, 2012:26). It involves the selection and organisation of content and learning activities (Yezdan, 2014:5). It must look beyond considerations of content alone (Kelly, 2004:35). Curriculum developers must acknowledge the fact that the nature of the schools' purposes and the actual manner in which they are described and organised will have dramatic effects on the practice of the school curriculum itself (Hlebowitsh, 2005:21). Adu and Ngibe (2014:988) state that the South African government should actively involve the teachers in formulating any policy that will affect curriculum. Teachers must become real participants and partners in reform if learner performance is to improve (US DoE, 2011:1). They are the

drivers of the curriculum who can identify curriculum factors affecting learner performance. After deciding on the content and organising learning activities, implementation begins.

3.3.3.4 Curriculum Implementation

Implementation is the translation of plans into action (Oliva, 2009:22). These plans include putting into practice officially prescribed courses of the study, syllabuses and subjects in order to help the learner acquire knowledge (Chaudhary, 2015:984). It is not simply a matter of getting teachers to comply, but one of motivating teacher ownership of the curriculum (Hlebowitsh, 2005:218). Curriculum implementation involves completing the instructional scheme of each subject in the term, planning the lessons as per timetable, using the transactional strategies, using appropriate media, providing the learning resources, promoting classroom learning experiences and continuous testing (Srivastava, 2013:20). For the curriculum to be effectively implemented, the principal must monitor and guide the implementation and ensure that the scheme of work, lesson plans and records of marks are prepared regularly (Chaundhary, 2015:986).

The process involves helping the learner acquire required skills; therefore, the learner is the central figure in the curriculum implementation process (Chaudhary, 2015:984). Successful policy implementation relies on a substantive understanding of real experiences and capabilities of the SA provincial system and education and training institutions, the setting of achievable policy objectives and priorities over time and regular reporting on these (DBE, 2009:20). The following questions have to be taken into consideration when implementing a curriculum: Does the school have a well-defined philosophy? Is it accepted by teachers? Has school evaluation been done? Have the recommendations been acted upon? Does the school participate in educational innovations? Does the staff participate in professional activities? (Yasmin, Rafiq, & Ashraf, 2013:23).

Effective implementation of curriculum and effective teaching and learning depends on the quality and quantity of teachers the country has. Teaching experience and appropriate teacher qualifications also help to ensure effective implementation (Nkadi, 2015:119). The number of qualified teachers in South Africa improved from 53% in 1990 to 97% in 2013 (DBE, 2013a:n.p.). While this is a remarkable achievement, the question remains as to whether they are well-equipped to implement the curriculum effectively.

Attrition of teachers from the system also needs to be considered. According to OECD, (2008a:23) the number of teacher graduates has dropped to less than one-third of the estimated annual replacement needs and two-thirds of them have recently considered

leaving the profession. Each year, Africa loses an estimated 20 000 skilled workers, including qualified teachers, to developed countries in search of better employment opportunities (Higherlife Foundation, 2016:2). Teachers continue to empower themselves in other areas and leave the system soon after qualifying for other professions (DBE, 2016a:15). Furthermore, teachers resign in particular to cash in their pensions, leaving the system with a teacher shortage (ibid.). The question that needs to be addressed is what the DBE is doing to motivate teachers to enter this profession and how it is planning to motivate those teachers who are in the profession already so that they do not opt for other professions. During the 2015/16 financial year, 1 381 young and qualified teachers left the system. Because of the continuous attrition, the DBE (2015b:80) initiated the Funza Lushaka bursary to ensure a constant supply of young and qualified teachers. However, while the Funza Lushaka bursary ensures a constant supply of teachers, it may not guarantee stability.

In January 2015, the Minister of Basic Education, in her speech on the 2014 matric results stated: “the quality of education of any system is predicated on the quality of its teachers” (SA Breaking News, 2015:4). I believe that this is the most fundamental question to answer to resolve the current crisis. Do we really have teachers who are well-equipped to implement the curriculum effectively? Are they continuously upgrading their skills and knowledge? I noted that workshops are mainly organised when a new curriculum has to be introduced (which has happened three times in the last 20 years). For instance, when C2005 was introduced in 1998, the workshops were held only once in Gauteng, and that was in preparation for the new curriculum introduced in 2002. Based on my experience, the OBE approach was characterised by too much paperwork, the introduction of portfolio files for the learners’ assessment, new terminology, and confusion among teachers. As a result, it was reviewed. When the RNCS was introduced in 2006, a workshop for Grade 11 was held, and in 2010, another workshop for Grade 12 teachers was held to address the challenges and pressure points that impact negatively on the quality of teaching and learning. The teachers were trained for three days and thereafter were expected to put what they had learned into practice. The RNCS lacked clarity on the content and on what the teachers had to teach, which was compounded by a lack of training and a lack of teacher support. When the CAPS was introduced in 2012 in the senior phase, the same approach was used, namely, three days’ training. The desired results will not be achieved if people who are responsible for the implementation of the curriculum are not fully equipped. The CAPS is associated with too much content and a lot of paperwork, although there is content progression from grade to grade. After putting all the plans into action, evaluation of the curriculum begins.

3.3.3.5 Curriculum Evaluation

Curriculum evaluation determines the extent to which the curriculum has been successful or not (Yezdan, 2014). Only through continuous and good quality monitoring of a new curriculum will we be able to see whether it is working (DEVCO, 2014:21). It is focused on the four quality criteria of relevance, consistency, practicality and effectiveness (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009:4). Evaluation is a process we use to judge the value and effectiveness of any particular educational activity (Kelly, 2004:137). It can be used by different stakeholders using multiple methods (O'Neil, 2015:101). It is used to obtain data on learners' achievement and to measure whether the learning process was effective (Maheshwari, 2015:5). Every curriculum indicates when and how it should be evaluated to ensure that the goals set have been achieved (Beacco, et al., 2015:89).

Evaluation is focused both on the suitability of assessment and of the content (Kelly, 2004:15). This is done by teacher evaluation of learners, learner evaluation of teachers, material evaluation and evaluation by means of tests and examinations (Srivastava, 2013:21). The key evaluation question is whether we have been successful in designing a curriculum that has enabled learners to successfully learn what was intended (Man & Waters, 2012:170). According to Tyler (1949:3), evaluation is a process of collecting evidence which requires innovative thinking about ways to demonstrate whether core purposes in the curriculum have been fulfilled. Teachers often evaluate solely in order to understand whether they have reached the purpose they explicitly sought, forgetting that evaluation is an essential component in curriculum development (Hlebowitsh, 2005:23).

Evaluation gauges the effect of curriculum on learners' attainments and on teaching practices as well as the extent to which it is adapted to the needs and expectations of learners and society in general (Beacco, et al., 2015:89). It draws on one's judgement to determine the overall value of the outcome based on the assessment data to improve the recognised weaknesses, gaps or deficiencies (Northern Illinois University, 2011:1). Evaluation processes are subjective and are always affected by context (Ewing, 2013:54). To evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and activities used by teachers to facilitate the learning process, the assessment of a learner is an important element (Ewing, 2013:55). If learners are assessed on a regular basis, it will be easier for the teacher to identify problem areas and improve learner performance. The CAPS is a good curriculum and the assessments are well structured. Research-based projects might not be a good measurement hence they are done at home where learners get help from their parents and friends or even worse, give anyone their projects without them making any effort. In certain

subjects like Accounting, all assessments are from the district or province and they are only distributed to schools two days before the learners write. This is a strategy to ensure that teachers do not teach learners what is on the test or the school-based assessment. It also helps the teachers to measure how effective their teaching was.

### 3.3.4 Curriculum Change

Every time there are changes happening around the world, the school curriculum needs to be updated to address the needs of the society (Glenn, 2017:1). For example, some countries change their curricula in order to raise standards in literacy and numeracy (Pepper, 2008:4). All these changes are necessary because of the many challenges facing curriculum developers and implementers (Tshiredo, 2013:13). If teachers support and understand curriculum change, it is more likely that the change will succeed (Omondi, 2014:19). The changes that teachers encounter, initiate and implement differ in their complexity from place to place (Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 2014:2). To provide quality education, changes need to occur at various levels and in various aspects of the education system (Acedo, Adams & Popa, 2012:2).

Curriculum change should introduce new context that are bound to change behaviour for the better (Fullan, 2003:1). In Nigeria, the current national curriculum is activity-based and is aimed at helping teachers to move away from the traditional talk-and-chalk approaches and provides a framework for assessment on what should be taught, how is it to be taught and how learning outcome should be assessed (Ahmad, 2016:78). New Zealand's curriculum encourages its learners to value excellence, innovation, inquiry and curiosity, diversity, equity community and participation, ecological sustainability, integrity and respect (Wan & Gut, 2011:96). United Kingdom's curriculum is a 3E Framework based on a simple notion of *Enhance*, which means introduce simple and effective ways to actively support learners and increase their activity and self-responsibility; *Extent* which means further activities that facilitate key aspects of learners' individual and collaborative learning must be highly considered; and *Empower* which requires higher levels of individual and collaborative learning (Fotheringham, Strickland & Aitchison, 2012:3). Norway's curriculum specifies the levels of competence expected from pupils in each subject and in Slovenia, the curriculum is shifting away from emphasising the memorisation of facts towards learning skills and problem-solving (Pepper, 2008:7).

Fifty years ago, both South Korea and Finland had an emotive curriculum, and now both countries are known internationally for being the best (Choi, 2014:1). South Korea came out first for achieving high educational outcomes, followed by Japan second, Singapore third and Hong Kong fourth in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) test (MBC Times, 2009:1). Asian curricula depend strongly on committed individual teachers to provide additional teaching to those learners who need it most (McKinsey, 2007:58). In Japan, the ethic of hard work, technology and extracurricular activities plays a major role in its curriculum (Fair Reporters, 2015:1). Over several years, in Pakistan, the literacy rate and education level improved and well-educated, competitive, skilled learners that meet the growing, dynamic market requirements were produced (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012:2).

In the mid-1980s, the Outcome-Based Education approach was introduced in countries such as England, parts of the United States of America (USA), New Zealand, Australia and eventually in South Africa. OBE was not successful in Western countries (Lui & Shum, 2012:1). In many parts of the world (USA, Australia and New Zealand), its adoption was linked to a drop in standards and was widely rejected in favour of standards-based education (Ashton, 2008:1). Even so, South Africa decided to adopt this approach.

In 1995, the South African government began the process of developing a new curriculum for the school system based on the growth and development of knowledge and technology (DBE, 2009: 2). The first approach of the new curriculum for the General Education Band known as OBE was introduced in the Foundation phase in 1997. Jansen (2010:1) commented “if the disastrous consequences of C2005 were visible, we would be horrified by the efforts of our democratic government”. Why did South Africa even consider implementing a system that had already failed in well-developed countries which had all the resources to have made it succeed? Changes in curriculum should first be piloted before it can be released for use in schools so as to evaluate the effects and its validity effectively (Adu & Ngibe, 2014:988). However, the concerns of the teachers led to a review of the curriculum in 2000. Ongoing implementation challenges led to the first curriculum revision: The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) 2002 and the NCS Grades 10-12 were produced (DBE, 2011b: iii). Even that was problematic and, in 2009, the Minister of Basic Education appointed a task team to review the implementation of NCS (ibid.). In January 2012, the new curriculum, namely CAPS was implemented (DBE, 2011b: iii).

These ongoing and sweeping curriculum changes affected teachers, parents and resources, and were generally problematic.

#### 3.3.4.1 Effects on Teachers

Continuous change in curriculum affects the lives, relationships and working patterns of teachers (Adu & Ngibe, 2014:984). It makes teachers struggle to reach the expected learner performance for some time until they master it *(*ibid.). The teachers were underprepared with regard to professional levels, learning area competence and curriculum management. As a result, morale and motivation levels were also low (Mahomed, 2004:10). If teachers are underprepared, curriculum implementation will not be successful. If curriculum change has to be successful, the key driver is the development of the teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes and the alignment of teacher training methods (Tshiredo, 2013:1). It is, therefore, vital for the teachers to be thoroughly equipped if curriculum changes are to be implemented. The Minister of Basic Education, in her speech on the NSC results in January 2015, mentioned that they were conscious of the fact that teachers, learners, examiners and moderation panel work better with what they know (DBE, 2015c:3).

The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement is problematic because it lacks favourable conditions for its implementation including suitably qualified and experienced teachers (Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2014:380). The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement workshops helped the teachers to understand the policy but did not prepare them for the challenges they would experience in the classroom (Moodley, 2013:91). A study conducted by Mbatha (2016:1) revealed that one of the challenges of the CAPS was inadequate teacher training. The Basic Education Portfolio Committee visited the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga where it found that many teachers had poor content knowledge included in the CAPS (Nkosi, 2012:2). Kamla (2016:76) notes that subject advisors were unable to offer enough support to teachers because of lack of content knowledge of the subject matter. They were unclear about the CAPS as a new curriculum, and, as a result, it was difficult for them to assist the teachers (Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2014:383).

#### 3.3.4.2 Effects on Parents

Curriculum change affects parents because they need to change their understanding of the education that their children receive (Adu & Ngibe, 2014:988). Parents complain that they are not well informed about issues regarding different subjects, and they cannot, therefore, participate actively in their children's education (Mahomed, 2004:6). Poor involvement of parents creates a gap in the inputs and outputs that would have benefited the learner (DBE, 2016a:16). Parents play a critical role in learner's academic performance (Higherlife Foundation, 2016:3). Parents should be encouraged to provide necessary support to their

children because the lack of parental involvement is also one of the major factors affecting learner performance (Nkadi, 2015:122). Learners whose parents are involved in their education generally perform well in their examinations (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012:3).

3.3.4.3 Effects on Resources

Curriculum change has financial implications, because of the additional resources that are required (Gruba, Moffat, Sondergaard & Zobel, 2004:3). Curriculum change is resource-intensive, and availability of resources is critical for its success (Tshiredo, 2013:1). Implementation of the curriculum requires new timetables, training of provincial officials, principals, HODs and teachers and communication with parents and learners (DBE, 2011b:6). It also requires the necessary home, social and economic conditions such as appropriate books, libraries, computers and other relevant equipment. However, most South Africans do not have access to these resources (Mahomed, 2004:9). With C2005 failing to achieve the desired results, there was a major shift that needed to be undertaken, which cost the country a lot of money (Paul, 2015:1).

In 1998, the Minister for Education postponed the introduction of C2005 in the senior grades for up to four years due to a shortage of resources and funds (Steyn, et al., 2011:32). The shortfall for learner support material for all levels, in 1998 alone, stood at R280 million and this contributed to the inability of the DoE to ensure smooth implementation of the new curriculum (ibid.). Even after all the efforts and money spent on the implementation and modification of C2005, South Africa continued to experience a crisis in education. For each curriculum introduced thereafter, namely, C2005, the NCS, the RNCS and the CAPS, millions of rand were spent on training teachers, developing materials, preparing curriculum facilitators, writing and rewriting learning guides and arranging conferences (Jansen, 2010:1).

During 2015/16, R500 000 was allocated to training Grade 10 Mathematics teachers but it was not conducted as a result of financial constraints (DBE, 2015c:88). There are small schools across all provinces, especially in rural areas which are not conducive to teaching and learning, which also affects the distribution of resources (DBE, 2016a:16). Curriculum change seems more like a money-making scheme in South Africa for curriculum designers, textbook authors, workshop trainers and food caterers rather than focusing on improvement of the curriculum. One of the challenges of the CAPS was a shortage of resources (Mbatha, 2016:1). Inadequate resources are a critical problem influencing curriculum implementation (Kamla, 2016:70). Maharajh, Nkosi and Mkhize (2014:383) note that a lack of resources has

made it difficult to implement the CAPS effectively. Unless schools are well-equipped with laboratories, libraries and textbooks delivered on time, the CAPS implementation will not be successful (Seale, 2012:4).

### 3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the views and the research findings from the literature and related articles on issues pertaining to curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance were explored. Theoretical frameworks, namely, Freire's curriculum model and critical theory were discussed. Tyler's model was presented on how curriculum can be implemented effectively in order to improve Grade 12 learner performance.

The conceptual framework was done with special reference to the concept of curriculum, curriculum factors and how curriculum change affects the learners, parents and teachers. In everything we do, we need to set goals and objectives, content must be relevant to prepare learners for the outside world, learner-centred approaches should be encouraged, formative assessment should provide adequate preparation for learners to succeed in the summative assessments, and the learning environment should be conducive to learning for effective teaching and learning to take place. From the deliberations in this chapter, it is evident that our curriculum (the CAPS) is not effective because of the quality of learners it produces who are unable to read or write. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that are involved in curriculum transformation.

In the next chapter, I present the rationale for empirical study and the research methodology employed in the study. As part of the research methodology, the research instruments, the data collection and data analysis processes and methods are described.

# CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the research was to answer the main question as stated in Chapter 1, subsection 1.5.1, namely: What are the key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools?

The main research question is supported by the following sub-questions:

- How can curriculum theory effectively guide curriculum implementers?
- What are the key curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa?
- What are the effects of curriculum change?
- How do teachers perceive the CAPS in South Africa?
- What are teachers' experiences regarding the CAPS?

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research design and methods for the empirical research employed in the study. As part of the research methods, the research instruments, the data collection and data analysis processes and methods are described.

## 4.2 RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The rationale for the empirical research was to ensure that the recommendations for improving Grade 12 learner performance are based on HODs' and teachers' perspectives on how they perceive and experience the CAPS. Empirical research serves as a basis for the research process (Brown & Hale, 2014:24). It means that the research is basically related to one or more aspects of a real situation and deals with facts that provide a basis for external validity of the research results (Kumar, 2011:97). Furthermore, it is guided by evidence obtained from systematic research rather than personal experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:9). Accordingly, the empirical nature of the study dictated the use of in-depth, open-ended individual interviews with HODs and focus group interviews with the teachers as data collection techniques. The instruments were designed to enable the researcher to extract more information about curriculum challenges they experienced on a daily basis and how to improve learner performance. Willis (2007:36) adds that what we know comes from experience. The participants' experience regarding curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance were investigated.

Being an interpretive enquiry, the study aimed to interpret, describe and report on the reflections and lived experiences of HODs and teachers as research participants. Against the background of the theoretical overview as the guiding framework, curriculum factors can be identified by interpreting the research participants' own version and the meaning they bring to their experiences. The role of identifying curriculum factors is captured by personal reflections, perspectives and feedback of participants in preparation for improved Grade 12 learner performance. Furthermore, interpretive enquiry helped me to extract more information about the HODs' and the teachers' interpretation of the curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance. I was able to clarify questions and to put at ease the teachers who felt uncomfortable when responding to some of the questions.

Moody (2002:2) states that empirical research can be useful in answering particular research questions. Ideas must be thoroughly and carefully tested before they can be considered knowledge (Bryman, 2016:20). Research questions asked can only be answered by looking at the world other than thinking about it (Sumser, 2001:6). For this reason, I interviewed HODs individually and teachers in a focus group in order to understand their world. In addition, research questions can be answered by seeing, hearing, touching and tasting (Jackson, 2011:10). Empirical research was done in order to confirm the knowledge of curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools (Matthews & Ross, 2010:22). The reason for inclusion of empirical research was to capture the authentic experiences, descriptions and personal reflections of the HODs and teachers concerning the challenges they face regarding the curriculum.

Since it was relevant to this study to gain an in-depth understanding of the curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance, a commitment to a multiple case study was required. This study is expected to collect important information that could be of benefit in identifying ways to improve Grade 12 learner performance. It gave the researcher an opportunity to interact with the participants from different settings as it was conducted in three urban schools and three township schools. During the interviews and focus groups, I was able to see changes in facial expressions and detect changes in voice tones which enhanced the understanding of the participants' experiences. This was especially evident when dealing with issues related to policy, promotion requirements and curriculum change. Furthermore, it helped me to extract more information about relevant the HODs' and teachers' interpretation of the curriculum factors affecting learner performance. This study gave them an opportunity to raise their voices concerning their daily challenges.

## 4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the researchers' plan to collect and analyse evidence that will make it possible for the researcher to answer any question she or he has posed (Flick, 2009:128). It is a systematic study of designing, developing and evaluating educational interventions (Van den Akker, Bannan, Kelly, Nieveen & Tjeerd, 2013:11). Rugg and Petre (2007:61) add that things must be done according to a plan to have effective results. The function of research design relates to identification of procedures and logistical requirements required to undertake a study and secondly to emphasise the importance of quality in these procedures to ensure their validity, objectivity and accuracy (Kumar, 2011:96). It focuses on the end product of all the steps in the process to achieve the desired results (Vosloo, 2014:316). A credible research design is not only about selecting participants and effective research strategies but also adhering to research ethics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:338). The schematic presentation of the research design and methods is presented next in figure 4.1.

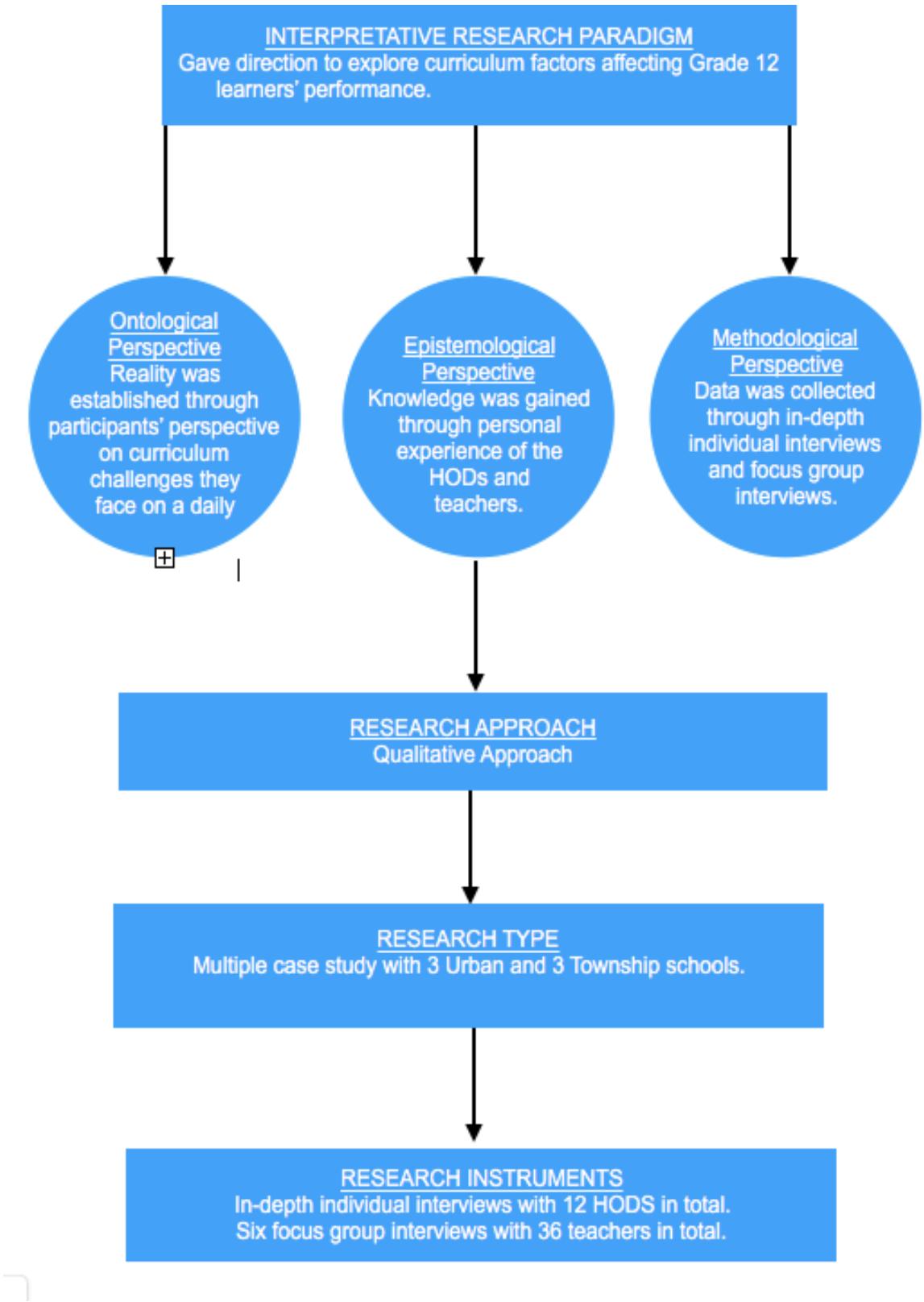


Figure 4.1: The schematic presentation of the research design and methods.

The next sections discuss the research paradigm, research approach and research type.

### 4.3.1 Interpretive Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a preferred way of understanding reality, building knowledge and gathering information about the world (Tracy, 2013:38). Interpretative research emphasizes the importance of understanding participant's perspective. It enabled me to explore the HODs and teachers' world It is based on a set of beliefs, practices, values and assumptions about the knowledge that informs the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:39). It gives directions about how things work (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:320). For the purpose of this study, the interpretive research paradigm was the most appropriate paradigm. The interpretive paradigm means to look at a situation from the participants' perspective (Kumar, 2011:98). The goal of the interpretive paradigm is to understand why and how, and to provide opportunities for participants to voice their opinions (Tracy, 2013:48). This means that the researcher can get insight and in-depth information from the research participants (Thanh & Thanh, 2015:26). My paradigm can differ on the basis of ontology, epistemology and methodology.

The ontological perspective explains the nature of reality. Reality in interpretivism can be examined and established through human interactions and meaningful actions (Thomas, 2010:298). Reality is indirectly established from the individual's interpretation and is subjective (Mack, 2010:8). It is established through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially (Johnson, 2008:1). It seeks an explanation from participants' perspectives rather than the objective observation of the action (Ponelis, 2015:538). This paradigm suggests that it is necessary to analyse social action from the participants' view (Tracy, 2013:41). It acknowledges their rights to reconstruct their meanings, to understand them and to avoid distorting them (Goran, 2012:5). According to Matthews and Ross (2010:28), gathering people's knowledge includes their interpretations and understanding. For this reason, I interviewed HODs and teachers in order to understand the nature of their reality of the curriculum experiences they face on a daily basis.

The interpretive paradigm is concerned with revealing multiple realities as opposed to searching for one objective reality (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:6). I did not conduct individual interviews only but focus group interviews as well in order to get different perspectives and experiences using the same interview guide. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011:17) state that meaning does not exist independently of humans and objects. Matthews and Ross (2010:28) add that researchers should work with data gathered in order to generate theory. According to Wills (2007:268), theory and practice are interdependent. In

line with this principle, a literature review was done first, followed by the fieldwork. Both were used to answer the research questions.

The epistemological perspective explains the nature of knowledge. Knowledge about reality is therefore always contemplated through the research (Tracy, 2013:40). Interpretivists assume that the social world cannot be understood by applying research principles adopted from the natural sciences (Vosloo, 2014:307). Knowledge is gained through personal experience (Mack, 2010:8). The interpretive paradigm helps us understand meaningful interpretation of the world which the participants have already interpreted by the meanings they provide and reproduce as a necessary part of their everyday activities (Tracy, 2013:42). The participants and I were interlocked in an interactive process of talking and listening, reading and writing (Thomas, 2010:298). The researcher remains open to new knowledge throughout the whole process and lets it develop with the help of participants (Edirisingha, 2012:1). The researcher and the participants understand that the world is a central part of how we understand ourselves, others and the world (Johnson, 2008:1).

The methodological perspective explains strategies for collecting and analysing data. Processes of data can be collected amongst others by text messages, interview and reflective sessions (Thomas, 2010:298). These methods ensure adequate interaction between the researcher and the participants in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality (Johnson, 2008:1). The interpretive paradigm offered an opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of curriculum factors affecting learner performance.

### 4.3.2 Research approach

There are two basic approaches to research, that is, qualitative and quantitative approaches. There are also different types of questions that require a quantitative approach or a qualitative approach, depending on what the researcher is looking for (Bodgan & Bilken, 2010:8). This study used a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach investigates a problem in depth and provides a detailed solution (Creswell, 2012:16). Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009:6) say that it helps us to understand how people look at things differently. Participants provide new perspectives and new knowledge (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007:350). It produces findings that cannot be arrived at when using the quantitative approach (Rahman, 2016:103). It even helps us understand complex phenomena that are impossible to capture quantitatively (Kumar, 2011: 96). Sometimes it can be used as an

introduction to statistical inquiry when the subject matter needs to be more clearly understood before it can be measured (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:32).

Qualitative research provides a more in-depth and detailed account of how people understand the world, their society and its institutions (Tracy, 2013:25). It seeks to answer questions about why people behave the way they do, how people are affected by the events that go on around the around them, and how opinions and attitudes are formed (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009:7). Flick (2009:129) asserts that research questions must be formulated as clearly and unambiguously as possible and this must happen as early as possible. These questions can only be addressed by using qualitative data-collection tools such as interviews or focus groups because a quantitative survey cannot answer them very well (Kumar, 2011:96). With this in mind, individual interviews with HODs as well as focus group interviews were conducted.

The qualitative approach provides an opportunity to explore, enabling the researcher to reach beyond initial responses and rationales for example, “help me understand why you feel that way” (Qualitative Research Consultants Association, 2017:1). This type of interaction is organised in a well-ordered way (Flick, 2009:60). It allows the participants to speak for themselves in words and other actions (McLeod, 2017:2). Each act, word and gesture is significant in the eyes of the qualitative researcher (Bodgan & Bilken, 2010:1). The researcher gains an insider’s perspective because of the close researcher involvement (McLeod, 2017:3). Interaction gives the researcher the opportunity to observe, record and interpret non-verbal communication as part of a respondent’s feedback which is valuable during interviews, discussions and during analysis (Qualitative Research Consultants Association, 2017:2). However, Tracy (2013:12) claims that qualitative researchers must think carefully about how they will experience research to avoid being subjective because the quality of evidence found is dependent on the researcher. Consequently, I did less talking and more listening. The time required for data collection, analysis and interpretation are lengthy and great care must be taken to interpret data accurately (McLeod, 2017:3). I had time during the school holidays to analyse and interpret data.

Complex textual descriptions of how people experience a phenomenon is provided (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2011:3). Ritchie and Lewis (2003:33) add that participants will need time to reflect both on the issue itself and on their own thinking. It helps them to overcome the self-consciousness that can inhibit spontaneous reactions and comments (Qualitative Research Consultants Association, 2017:2).

The research type for this study is discussed in the next section.

### 4.3.3 Research Type

This study made use of a multiple case study because the research was conducted at different urban schools and township schools and each school was regarded as a case. A single case can provide insight into the events and situations universal to where the group has been drawn (Kumar, 2011:123). A case study examines a case over time in depth, employing multiple sources of data found in the setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:24). Along this line, not only HODs were sources of data but also the teachers in the form of focus groups. Rose, Sprinks and Canhoto (2015:1) argue that objections to single case studies can arise from concerns about the representativeness of the chosen case, the extent to which generalisability is possible, and their vulnerability to bias. For this reason, a multiple case study was required. A multiple case study allows the researcher to explore differences within and between cases with the aim of replicating findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008:548). Conclusions from one case should be compared and constructed with the results from the other cases (Kumar, 2011:124). Conclusions from urban schools were compared with conclusions from township schools. Careful attention is needed to show the way in which evidence supports the conclusions reached (Rose, Sprinks & Canhoto, 2015:1). A multiple case study allows theory to be better grounded in more varied evidence with the particular advantage that it allows for cross-case comparison (Yin, 2009:50). The next section describes the research techniques used in this study.

## 4.4 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Research techniques used for research (Bodgan & Bilken, 2010:6) are the bridge that brings our philosophical framework together with our methods in practice (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011:13). Methodological principles link the strategies together (Richards & Morse, 2013:10). Cooper, Glaesser, Gomm and Hammersley (2012:5) assert that the nature of research questions being investigated will guide the researcher on which techniques to select. According to Denzil and Lincoln (2011:104), research techniques are the processes used in seeking out new knowledge. As part of the research method, the selection of participants, the research instruments, the data collection, the data analysis processes and the methods regarding HOD's and teachers' perspectives on the curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance are described.

The next section provides information on the selection of participants, the tools used to gather data and the procedures used in analysing data.

### 4.4.1 Selection of Participants

Creswell (2007:133) states that it is important to select participants who will be willing to openly and honestly share information about their experiences. Sargeant (2012:3) adds that research questions must be clear and the researcher must select participants who can best answer the question. When we conduct research, it is very often the case that we do not have the time, resources, or ability to collect data on the population, or the universe of all the possible units, instances or observations of the phenomenon we are studying. We must, therefore, use a sample of participants from the population we are studying (Brown & Hale, 2014:117).

In this study, the selected participants were from the Ekurhuleni North District of Gauteng province. Presently there are 78 secondary schools in the district, divided into six clusters. Cluster 1 was chosen because it consisted of urban schools and township schools. The urban secondary schools situated in this cluster were situated in a neighbourhood where most parents are highly qualified. The schools are regarded as ex-Model C schools which are well-resourced. In the township secondary schools, most parents are unemployed and some learners are heading the home. Cluster 1 was selected, as covering the entire population was not possible in terms of time and available resources.

The main point is that the participants selected should be suitable for the study, provide information-rich data and have the ability to provide required information. In this regard, when selecting the research participants, I ensured that they were sufficient, knowledgeable and representative enough to ensure reliability of the results. Selection of participants in qualitative research is usually purposive. This means participants who share particular characteristics and have the potential to provide rich, and diverse data relevant to the research questions are chosen (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007:350). This is used when the opinion of experts in a specific field is the topic of interest (Martinez-Mesa, Gonzalez-China & Bastos, 2016:3). The researcher purposefully selects participants and sites to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012:206). This method ensures representation of important elements of the research question (Seargeant, 2012:2). This means choosing people who have experience that the researcher wants to explore (Polkinghorne, 2005:140). The criteria for selection can be informed by a number of factors including the principal aims

of the study, existing knowledge about the study, hypotheses that the researcher may want to explore or gaps in knowledge about the study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:80).

The participants were deliberately selected on the basis of their knowledge about the problem at hand, namely, changes in the curriculum and accessibility and experience about curriculum factors affecting learner performance. Two HODs from each of the six schools (12 in total) were chosen because they were regarded as sources of information-rich data. Heads of Departments were purposefully selected with the assistance of the deputy principal or the principal at each school. Heads of Departments were seen as credible sources of data based on their leadership and administrative roles in curriculum implementation. The success or failure of the curriculum depends on them as they are the monitors of the curriculum implementation. Targeting HODs and the teachers provided corroborating data about how the CAPS can be effectively implemented for successful teaching and learning.

A summary of selected participants is provided in Table 4.1. Participants for this study were not only from urban schools but also from township schools.

Table 4.1: HODs as Research Participants (N=12)

| **Urban School (US 1)** | **Urban School (US 2)** | **Urban School (US 3)** | **Township School (TS 1)** | **Township School (TS 2)** | **Township School (TS 3)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| HOD1M<br>Commerce<br>20-25 TE | HOD1F<br>Arts<br>15-20 TE | HOD1F<br>SS<br>20-25 TE | HOD1M<br>Language<br>30-25 TE | HOD1M<br>Maths<br>25-30 TE | HOD1F<br>Language<br>25-30 TE |
| HOD2M<br>Maths<br>15-20 TE | HOD2F<br>Science<br>15-20 TE | HOD2M<br>Language<br>20-25 TE | HOD2M<br>Maths<br>15-20 TE | HOD2F<br>Language<br>10-15 TE | HOD2M<br>Commerce<br>20-25 TE |
| 2 Men | 2 Women | 1 Man<br>1 Woman | 2 Men | 1 Man<br>1 Woman | 1 Man<br>1 Woman |
| 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

Key: TS represents township schools while US represents urban schools. M represents Male and F represents Female. LO represents Life Orientation. TE represents the years of teaching experience.

A profile of the focus group participants is provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Teachers as Focus Group Research Participants n=36

| Urban School (US FG1) | Urban School (US FG2) | Urban School (US FG3) | Township School (TS FG1) | Township School (TS FG2) | Township School (TS FG3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T1F<br>Tourism<br>15-20 TE | T1F<br>Maths<br>15-20 TE | T1F<br>Geography<br>20-25 TE | T1F<br>B. Economics<br>20-25 TE | T1F<br>isiZulu<br>15-20 TE | T1F<br>isiZulu<br>20-25 TE |
| T2M<br>Maths<br>15-20 TE | T2F<br>L. Science<br>20-25 TE | T2F<br>English<br>30-35 TE | T2M<br>Maths<br>15-20 TE | T2F<br>English<br>10-15 TE | T2M<br>Accounting<br>20-25 TE |
| T3F<br>LO<br>30-35 TE | T3M<br>Afrikaans<br>30-35 TE | T3F<br>Maths<br>30-35 TE | T3M<br>SS<br>10-15 TE | T3M<br>B. Studies<br>25-30 TE | T3M<br>Maths<br>30-35 TE |
| T4F<br>Afrikaans<br>20-25 TE | T4M<br>NS<br>20-25 TE | T4F<br>Economics<br>30-35 TE | T4F<br>isiZulu<br>15-20 TE | T4F<br>Accounting<br>25-30 TE | T4F<br>P. Sciences<br>30-35 TE |
| T5M<br>P. Science<br>20-25 TE | T5F<br>Accounting<br>25-30 TE | T5F<br>L. Science<br>20-25 TE | T5F<br>L. Science<br>20-25 TE | T5F<br>SS<br>15-20 TE | T5F<br>Geography<br>20-25 TE |
| | T2F<br>English<br>10-15 TE | T3M<br>History<br>30-35 TE | T6F<br>English<br>25-30 TE | | T1F<br>Technology<br>20-25 TE |
| | T5F<br>Economics<br>20-25 TE | | | | T1F<br>Economics<br>20-25 TE |
| 2 Men<br>3 Women | 2 Men<br>5 Women | 1 Man<br>5 Women | 2 Men<br>4 Women | 1 Man<br>4 Women | 2 Men<br>5 Women |
| 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 |

Six focus groups (one per school, 36 participants in total) consisting of five to seven teachers representing different subjects were chosen because they are curriculum implementers. Teachers were purposefully selected with the assistance of the HODs. The selection of teachers who participated in the focus group interviews took into consideration how long they had been teaching. A minimum of 10 years' teaching experience was taken into consideration. The selection of teachers, thus, was not motivated by gender but by whether they met the criteria and their willingness to participate in the study. HODs were not part of the focus group interviews, primarily because they had their own individual interviews and the focus groups (FGs) were only designed to allow teachers to freely express their ideas.

### 4.4.2 Data Collection

Data collection is more than simply deciding on whether to interview or observe participants and sites but also involves gaining access, determining the types of data to collect, developing data collection forms and administering the process in an ethical manner (Creswell, 2012:204). There are several ways of collecting the appropriate data which differ considerably in the context of money costs, time and other resources at the disposal of the researcher (Kumar, 2011:131). The data collection instruments that were used in this study were in-depth individual interviews and focus group interviews.

4.4.2.1 In-depth, open-ended individual Interviews

An in-depth interview is a face-to-face technique designed to provide a clear picture of the participants' perspectives on the research topic (Mack, et al., 2011:29). In interviews, we select experts in the field we are studying and ask them a series of questions to get their perspective on the research topic as the key source of information (Brown & Hale, 2014:146). According to Wills (2007:268), the setting for the interviews should be naturalistic and the process should be participatory. Thus, all interviews with HODs were conducted at the participants' schools. With semi-structured interviews, an interviewer can repeat questions which are not understood and give explanations where necessary (Kumar, 2011:99). Such interviews allow the researcher to focus precisely on the content of the interviewees' responses, paying close attention to tone, content and body language (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:21). I prepared a list of questions (an interview schedule) based on the research questions (Rugg & Petre, 2007:136). An interview gives the researcher an opportunity for direct interaction between the researcher and the research participants (Matthews & Ross, 2010:219).

Qualitative researchers use semi-structured or open unstructured interviews because it allows them to probe effectively for new evidence to be explored (Tracy, 2013:140). An interview guide was used; however, the researcher can decide on the sequence and wording during the interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:356). Participants are encouraged to talk about issues relevant to the research question by asking open-ended questions (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007:355). Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions are developed in advance along with prepared probes (Richards & Morse 2013:124). The semi-structured interviews comprised of eight key open-ended questions and were prepared to guide but not to constrain the interview process (Appendix F). The advantage of using open-ended questions is that one can get information not anticipated by the researcher (Guest,

Namey & Mitchell, 2013:21). It enables the participants to talk about the topic in their own way and allows for further explanation (Jackson, 2011:104). Participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspective of the researcher or past research findings (Creswell, 2012:218). The participants can also be asked follow-up questions to provide concrete evidence and clarity where necessary. Information gathered by means of open-ended questions is more likely to reflect the full richness and complexity of the views held by the participants (Kumar, 2011:132).

Open-ended questions were used to allow participants to express their thoughts more freely, from their own frame of reference rather than being confined by prearranged questions (Bodgan & Bilken, 2010:1). These questions focused on curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance; strategies to improve Grade 12 learner performance; main challenges faced by curriculum implementers and perceptions and experiences of teachers regarding the CAPS. The literature dealt with in the previous chapters shed light on curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance and helped me to prepare appropriate questions for the purpose of the study.

Individual interviews with HODs were conducted during their free time to get their perspective on curriculum factors affecting learner performance. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. These interviews conducted with the HODs granted me an opportunity to explore their feelings and views on curriculum challenges and learner performance. During the interviews, the participants were asked to freely and openly to describe their views, challenges and experiences based on the CAPS. In addition, they were given the opportunity to describe how they thought curriculum factors were affecting learner performance. All the interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. Valerie (2015:55) asserts that interviews are the most rewarding component of any qualitative research project.

4.4.2.2 Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews are semi-structured discussions with groups of 4 to 12 participants with the aim to explore a specific issue (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007:355). It is less expensive and needs far less time to complete than one on one interview (Kumar, 2011:124). They are used to generate information on collecting views and meanings that lie behind those views and are useful in generating a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs (Gill, Stewart, Tressure & Chadwick, 2008:5). This happens when a researcher and several volunteers meet in a group setting to effectively explore emotional

experiences (Tracy, 2013:167). In these discussions, the participants have an opportunity to share their perceptions, points of view, experiences and wishes without forcing a consensus. These discussions may be more naturalistic than in a one to one interview (Moriarty, 2011:10).

The researcher can increase the quality and the richness of data unlike one-on-one interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:363). It also saves time and money by interviewing a group of people at the same time instead of interviewing different individuals at different times (Flick, 2009:196). Focus groups interviews are effective when individuals are reluctant to provide information and when the time to collect data is limited (Creswell, 2012:218). The strength of the focus group interviews relies on allowing the participants to agree or disagree with each other so that it provides insight into how a group thinks about an issue (Toolkits, 2009:1). In order to focus on the discussion, I designed a focus group interview guide to ensure that all aspects pertaining to curriculum challenges were covered.

My aim with the focus group interviews was to hold and sustain productive discussions with the teachers representing different subjects (see Table 4.2) in order to capture as much data as possible about their perceptions and experiences regarding the curriculum challenges. Kumar (2011:99) states that the researcher must start by creating a thoughtful, permissive atmosphere, provide ground rules and set the tone of the discussion. Eliot (2005:2) further states that participants will not see the questions they are being asked, so the researcher must make sure that participants understand the questions posed. I designed short open-ended questions because the intention was to promote discussion. I visited the schools before data collection began to make appointments and arrangements with the teachers for the focus group interviews and also to explain the purpose of the research to all participants, familiarising them with the topic and outlining possible benefits that would accrue from the study. Each focus group consisted of five to seven participants and lasted for one hour. Both genders were included because it was based on their willingness to participate.

I identified with Ritchie and Lewis (2003:176) five stages of a focus group interview:

1. Setting the scene and ground rules

The purpose of the study was to identify curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance. I thanked everyone for their willingness to participate and informed them of the ground rules as per Appendix C. I visited the focus group locations to ensure that the rooms were comfortable and that the seats could be suitably arranged, to organise materials

(stationery, focus group guide, the audio- recorder, lists of participants, sign-in sheets, consent forms, name tags, clock and refreshments).

2. Individual introductions

Individuals introduced themselves according to the subject they were representing and were asked to write down their subject on the name tags provided.

3. The opening topic

I started the discussions with engagement questions followed by exploration questions and ended with exit questions as per Appendix H.

4. Discussion

I kept a mental note of what was being said and probed both group and individual members, using open-ended questions expressed in simple language. I also took notes of the terms used by respondents, explored their meanings and formulated further comments.

5. Reporting

I summarised answers, took into consideration how the focus group results linked with the focus group purpose. Participants were given a chance to say anything they had not already said. I then thanked everyone for participating in the study and stressed how helpful the discussion had been.

The following section discusses the pilot study.

4.4.2.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study allows the researcher to identify potential problems in the proposed study (Degu, 2006:82). It also assists the researcher to refine the research instruments (Turner, 2010:6). Research instruments were tried and tested to avoid ambiguity, misunderstanding, and to check their clarity and relevance for the purpose. First, the instruments were reviewed by three district facilitators for relevance and clarity. Following their comments and suggestions, two questions in the individual and focus group interview schedules were revised, rephrased and clarified. Their comments included that more clarity should be given to provide better direction to the participants. For instance, one of the facilitators commented that item 2 of the research instrument for both the individual and the focus group interviews should include examples of curriculum factors.

My intention was to establish whether the instruments were functional before undertaking the main study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:237) state that questions have to be pilot-tested with individuals that have the same characteristics as the population, as this will inform the researcher on whether any changes are needed in the questions. This will help the researcher to test methods and explore their implication (Maxwell, 2011:19). The study was piloted on two HODs individually and five teachers at my school as a focus group. The participants were interviewed because they had the same characteristics as those that were in the main study. The participants were interviewed using the interview schedules that I prepared (Appendix B and C). The outcome of the pilot study yielded the practical results that I expected. Regarding the time taken for individual and focus group interviews, the pilot interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes; therefore, 60 minutes were allocated to the interviews and the focus group discussions.

### 4.4.3 Data Analysis

Analysis is a process of working with data to describe, discuss, interpret, evaluate and explain the data in terms of the research questions of the research project (Matthews & Ross, 2010:317). Qualitative data analysis involves coding the data, dividing the text into smaller units, assigning a code to each unit and then grouping the codes into themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:208). The purpose of qualitative data analysis is to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Sargeant, 2012:3). Kumar (2011:99) suggests that the researcher must discover the key components underlying a particular phenomenon so that these can be used to provide a clearer understanding. Once the data has been condensed into manageable chunks, main themes are established, recurring responses are identified, then concepts and categories are developed (Dolowitz, Buckler & Sweeney, 2008:50). In this study, data analysis started as soon as data collection began and was an ongoing process. Audio-recordings from individual interviews and focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim. For the purpose of this study,

Figure 4.2 was followed to analyse data. I followed these steps because they were found to be relevant to this study.

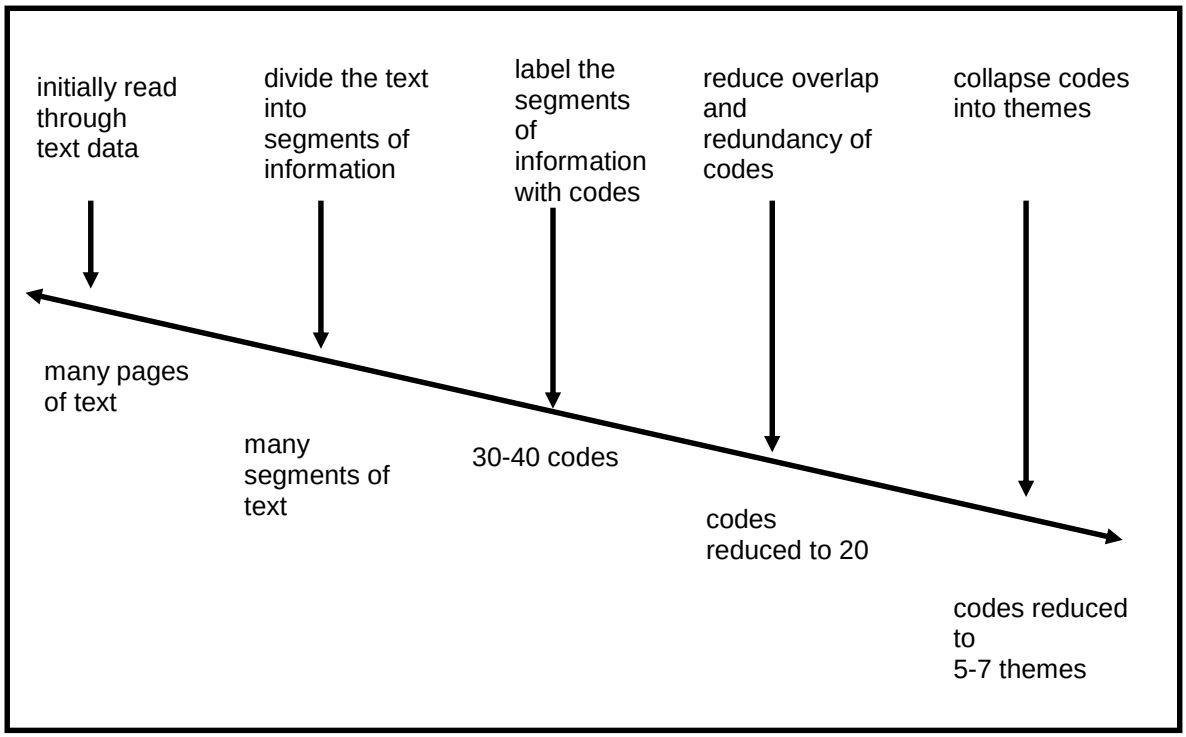


Figure 4.2: Refining the Data Source (Creswell, 2012:244)

Figure 4.2. is explained in the following steps. These steps are explained in more detail in Chapter 5.

**Step 1: Initially read through text data**

The first step in coding data is to generate as many categories as possible. McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 371) state that the researcher must read at least two datasets in order to get the ideas about what the data segments will look like. As the data come in and are evaluated, they should be prepared for analysis and coded (Richards & Morse, 2013: 162). Coding is a process by which items are assigned meaningful codes (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010:221).

**Step 2: Divide the text into segments of information**

After such initial categories have been produced, I further dividing them into even more sub-categories. This involves reading segments and asking: What word or words describe it? And what were participants doing or talking about? Each code should be written in the margin (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:371). The categories should be continuously reviewed to ensure that the coding is accurate and whether it is sufficiently interesting. Notes should be made on all coding for later recall. Even apparently simple topics may sprout complex ideas (Richards & Morse, 2013:162).

**Step 3: Label the segments of information with codes**

The categories were arranged and rearranged until each has been assigned a label. A list of the codes should be drawn up with one column for each dataset and compared for duplication. Similar codes should be grouped and others recoded to fit the description (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 372). It helps if the researcher does not see the coding of a document as the last chance to read and think about it (Richards & Morse, 2013:162).

**Step 4: Reduce overlap and redundancy of codes**

The data was examined and numbered according to the categories into which each piece of data fits. The codes should be organised and checked to see if they correspond with the data and whether some codes in the data might initially have been overlooked (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:372). If topic coding is used, each category should be revisited to ensure that it is correctly classified (Richards & Morse, 2013:163).

**Step 5: Collapse the codes into themes**

Patterns should be detected and grouped into categories. Typically, qualitative studies will have between four and eight categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:377). After reviewing all the data assigned to each category, the list of categories was refined even further if necessary. Different interpretations are inevitable so it is essential to monitor, revisit and debate them and make them part of the process of analysis (Richards & Morse, 2013:164). The transcription needs to be as accurate as possible including ungrammatical expressions, swear words, pauses, um's and ah's, which lends authenticity to the data (Rugg & Petre, 2007:91). Trustworthiness of data and ethical considerations are explained next.

## 4.5 MEASURES FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers, inter alia, to the quality of data analysis (Sargeant, 2012:5). Hills (2012:183) emphasises that we can feel more certain that research was conducted in a trustworthy manner if consistent results are found across studies. In contrast, if inconsistent results are found, readers might suspect that either the research was not conducted in a trustworthy manner or that characteristics of the samples or data collection varied across studies. In this regard, I used in-depth, open-ended individual interviews and focus group interviews and collected data from different sources (HODs, teachers and literature). Trustworthiness comprises of four elements, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Billups, 2014:1), which are discussed next.

### 4.5.1 Credibility

The issue of credibility with transparency was critical to this study. The credibility of the researcher's interpretation of the data may be tested by the transparency of the analysis and interpretation of the data (Matthews & Ross, 2010:12). The questions that need to be answered are: Do the findings appear truthful and do they capture a holistic representation of the phenomenon under exploration? (Bullips, 2014:1). Credibility establishes a match between the constructed realities of participants and realities represented by the researcher (Sinkovicks, Penz & Ghuari, 2008:699). Bryman (2016:44) notes that credibility is similar to internal validity which relates to how believable the findings are. If a report is credible, readers feel confident in using its findings to act and make decisions (Tracy, 2013:239). In order to ensure credibility, it is believed that participants are the best judge (Kumar, 2011:172). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:84) state that to ensure credibility, the researcher must be able to answer the following questions: Does the study appear objective with little or no research bias? Are conclusions reasonable and was the methodology appropriate for the investigation? In response to these questions, I considered the practice of viewing phenomena from more than one perspective through methodological triangulation and data from different sources of data (in-depth open-ended interviews with HODs and focus group interviews with the teachers). I used similar questions for all the participants to ascertain the different levels of understanding, perceptions and experiences of the participants regarding the CAPS. Tracy (2013:239) further adds that qualitative credibility is achieved through thick description, different meanings and partiality.

### 4.5.2 Transferability

The issue of transferability was also critical to this study. Transferability means how far the researcher is able to claim that the results from the research are truthful and relevant to the wider population or a different context (Matthews & Ross, 2010:12). In order to assess that the results from the research are truthful and relevant, similar projects employing the same methods but conducted in different environments could be of great value ((Kumar, 2011:172). When readers believe that research findings correspond to something significant in their own world, then quality has been accomplished through transferability (Tracy, 2013:239). Transferability is facilitated when the researchers provides a detailed description of the investigation and participants were selected purposefully. This practice allows the researcher to evaluate the transferability of the findings to people, places and the phenomenon under similar conditions with similar participants (Billups, 2014:3). Bryman

(2016:44) notes that transferability is similar to external validity, which means that the findings apply to other contexts. In this study, detailed contextual information was provided regarding curriculum challenges and how they affect Grade12 learner performance. These enabled findings to be transferred to other comparable urban and township schools in a similar position. In this study, the results could possibly be applied to schools in other districts in urban and township areas. Participants were selected purposefully and quotes from interviews were reported verbatim.

### 4.5.3 Dependability

The matter of dependability was also critical to this study. This means ensuring that the findings are consistent over time and across conditions, and that the same data collection methods would yield the same or similar results (Billups, 2014:3). In order to address the issue of dependability more directly, the process within the study should be reported in detail in order to provide an audit trail to allow further research to obtain similar results (Kumar,2011:172). Participants can evaluate the findings, the interpretations and recommendations of the study to make sure that they are supported by the data received from informants. HODs were involved in open-ended individual interviews and teachers were involved in focus group interviews. The data from these instruments were reported in great depth allowing the reader to appreciate the rigours of the research practices.

### 4.5.4 Confirmability

The concern of confirmability with objectivity was also critical to this study. Confirmability means that steps must be taken to ensure that research findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Kumar, 2011:172). These efforts are crucial not only to generate confidence in the results but also to reflect the accuracy and the truthfulness of the participants' perspectives (Billups, 2014:4). To achieve confirmability, researchers must demonstrate that the results are clearly linked to the conclusions in a way that can be followed and as a process, replicated (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016:20). I gave a detailed account of the information used and audio-record all the interviews. Interpretations included the verbatim words of the HODs and teachers.

## 4.6 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethics focuses on the disciplines that study standards of conduct such as philosophy, theology, law, psychology and sociology (Chang, 2015:72). Ensuring that research is ethically appropriate is a significant aspect of conduct of sound research (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010:61). Researchers should be open and honest with participants about all aspects of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:117). Valerie (2015:68) adds that issues around privacy, informed consent, anonymity, secrecy and being truthful must be taken into consideration when doing research.

Research committees have been established in many areas to ensure focus protection of all participants in the research process (Flick, 2009:36). In some situations, a formal ethical review of an intended project before starting to collect data is needed (Kumar, 2011:336). University of South Africa has established an ethics review committee, College of Education (CEDU) which convenes to discuss each project before the data collection process begin. Decisions reached by the CEDU could be approved, referred back for modification or disapproved with reasons. The project has to satisfy their requirements before they will issue an ethics clearance certificate to give the researcher permission to start the data collection processes.

I took the following ethical measures into consideration during fieldwork, namely: informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, anonymity, no harm or risk to participants and deception.

### 4.6.1 Informed consent

Informed consent means disclosing and explaining key aspects of the research and the data collection to the potential participants (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:326). This means informing them about their choice to participate or not (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:118). It ensures that participants decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate or not (Mack, et al., 2011:9). Informed consent protects the researcher from any possible accusations that he or she acted improperly when recruiting people to take part in the research (Kumar, 2011:338). Participants must voluntarily agree to participate without physical or psychological coercion (Denzil & Lincoln, 2011:65).

A requirement of informed consent is a request to complete the signed consent by participants to participate in the survey and, until the consent form is signed and returned,

the survey does not proceed (Stopher, 2012:86). However, Flick (2009:56) note that written consent may in some situations may be difficuly to obtain if you want to study people who are not competent to understand or are vulnerable, at the very least, you may ask another person to give you consent as a substitute. The informed consent form is given to individuals before they participate in a research study in order to inform them of the general nature of the study and in order to obtain their consent to participate (Jackson, 2011:56). All participants must sign and understand an informed consent form (Salkind, 2012: 37). In accordance with this I gave each participant informed consent form before the interviews and asked them to sign. Consent forms must state the mode of recording and the planned uses of the recordings (Richards & Morse, 2013:262).

Consent should be given freely; it is not acceptable to coerce people into participating (Matthews & Ross, 2010:73). Researchers should respect the right to refuse to participate in the research and inform the participants that they can change their decision or withdraw their informed consent at any stage of the research without giving any reason and without penalty (UNISA, 2007:12). In line with this principle, a letter requesting permission to conduct research was sent to the Gauteng DoE head office in Johannesburg and approval to conduct the research was used to request permission from the schools. Once permission was granted by the school, permission was also requested in writing from the HODs and teachers (Appendix D & F). The aim of the study was explained to all research participants. The research process and how the results would be used were also explained to the participants to allow them to make an informed decision on whether they wanted to participate in the research or not. Consent forms were signed on the days of the interviews (Appendix E & G).

### 4.6.2 Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity

Confidentiality means that no one has access to individual data or the names of participants except the researcher and that the participants know before they participate who will see the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:122). Confidentiality must be maintained throughout and after the conclusion of the study, which includes the identity of the participants as well as the results of any testing or evaluation regarding individual performance (Salkin, 2012:37). If identity of participants is collected, it must be protected at all times and not be left lying around in notebooks or unprotected computer files (Kumar, 2011:222). Codes of ethics insist on safeguards to protect peoples' identities and those of the research locations (Denzil & Lincoln, 2011:66). Risk minimisation should be applied to

research records and the researcher should make appropriate arrangements for the preservation and confidentiality of research records for five years after the submission of the report (UNISA, 2007:16). It is the researchers' responsibility to identify the potential risks associated with loss of confidentiality for participants in the research and implement ways to minimise risks or prevent breaches of confidentiality from occurring and to manage potential harm if they do (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:333).

The best method to handle this situation is probably to give each record a unique identification number and then remove the name, address and telephone number data, storing them in a separate confidential file that also includes the identification numbers and kept locked away for use only when there is a legitimate need to match the data to the unit records (Stopher, 2012:84). The right to privacy was secured by attaching a number and the subject or department to each of the research participants who were referred to as follows: the urban schools - US1, US2, USn, and township schools - TS1, TS2, TSn. Heads of Departments and teachers in a focus group were represented by a number and the subject for example, HOD1: Language department, HOD2: Mathematics department and focus group as FG1, T1, T2, and Language teacher or Mathematics teacher. In these examples, n represents the final number in the series. Finally, no person except the researcher had access to the participants' identity. Research participants were also informed about the way that the findings of the research would be disseminated, so that they could make a proper decision about participation (Matthews & Ross, 2010:78). Participants are often considered at risk if their privacy is compromised (Jackson, 2011:55). I took a precautionary measure by destroying all the hard copies after transferring them to the personal computer and the file was encrypted with a password. All the audio-recordings were also saved on the personal computer and encrypted with a password.

### 4.6.3 No harm or risk to participate

The first and most important priority is that no harm will come to those who participate and this includes psychological, emotional and physical harm (Salkind, 2012:37). The researcher needs to carefully anticipate risks and do whatever is needed to minimise them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:119). Researchers' intentions should not take priority at the expense of participants' rights (UNISA, 2007:10). It should be quite obvious that anyone who participates in the research should be safe while doing so (Matthews & Ross, 2010:77). In accordance with this principle, researchers have a duty to consider in advance the likely consequences of participation and to take measures that safeguard the interest of those

who help with the investigation (Flick, 2009:41). There was minimal risk involved or anticipated because the research was conducted at the participants' schools and only HODs and teachers were involved. All of them were older than 18, and no vulnerable participants were involved or sensitive information gathered.

### 4.6.4 Avoiding deception

Deception means lying to the participants concerning the true nature of the study because knowing the true nature of the study might affect their performance (Jackson, 2011:57). Researchers may be dishonest about who they are or what they are doing and thus use deception to conduct their research (Hese-Biber & Leavy, 2011:85). If deception is involved as part of the research, then all participants must be debriefed following the experiment or the session in which deception took place (Salkind, 2012:37). Walliman (2011:44) asserts that honesty must be maintained at all times, not only to enable straight forward above board communication but to induce a level of trust and credibility in the outcome of research. My study did not involve any deception. All the participants were informed about how the study would be conducted and the procedures were explained before the study commenced.

## 4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the use of empirical research to answer the research questions was explained. A qualitative research design was followed to collect and analyse data in the study. Within an interpretative research paradigm, a multiple case study strategy was employed. This strategy enabled a detailed study of the participants' perceptions on learner performance and curriculum factors. The data were collected from the sample comprising 12 individual interviews with HODs and 6 focus group interviews in total with 36 teachers about their perceptions of curriculum challenges and how they affect Grade 12 learner performance. The methods of data analysis employed in the study were also described in this chapter. The chapter also highlighted the outcome of the pilot study and the ethical procedures applied in the study. In Chapter 5 the research findings of the empirical investigation are reported and interpreted.

# CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of the study as stated in subsection 1.5.1 of Chapter 1, was to determine the key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools.

In the previous chapter, I presented a detailed account of the research design and methods used in the data collection.

This chapter reports on the research findings of the empirical investigation conducted to address the research question and the accompanying research sub-questions outlined in subsections 1.5.1 and 1.5.2. Results of the study are presented and discussed based on the literature review and research questions which are believed to be a useful strategy to pool all data streams together to provide an integrated answer to the research questions.

The empirical data were collected from the HODs and the teachers. The presentation and the analysis of the findings were in respect of their thoughts, perceptions and experiences about the CAPS implementation in South Africa. Views gathered through the collection of the empirical data from the participants are thus analysed, compared, interpreted and discussed in this chapter to provide answers to the postulated research questions.

## 5.2 RESEARCH PROCESS

This section provides a brief report on the research process. As mentioned already in Chapter 4, the research instruments were pilot tested and refined. As a result of pilot testing, questions were revised and some amendments were made to the interview schedules. The pilot testing enabled me to improve the quality and reliability (trustworthiness) of the data collected. The research process was satisfactory as the process went as planned with few challenges. Codes were assigned to certain themes and patterns that emerged. In the next sections, the report on the data collection processes, as per the respective data collection methods are provided.

### 5.2.1 In-depth Individual Interviews

I personally conducted in-depth semi-structured open-ended interviews with 12 HODs, two per school. The prepared interview guide (Appendix B) was used. I assured the participants that the information obtained would be treated with utmost confidentiality. I also informed them that participation in the study was voluntary and that they were under no obligation to participate and that they were free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason or without penalty.

I visited each school before data collection began, acquainted myself with the school environment, met the research participants and made appointments. The permission was obtained in advance and the consent forms were signed before the commencement of the interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded and permission to record the interviews was also requested before they began. Some of the HODs did not honor their appointments as they had other commitments and the interviews had to be rescheduled. The interviews were conducted over three days in some cases. The time taken for individual interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes. It was a challenge to take notes during the interviews so note-taking was kept to a minimum as it was often distracting to the interviewee.

### 5.2.2 Focus Group Interviews

One focus group interview per school was conducted with teachers representing different subjects to identify the curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance. The purpose of the research was explained and possible benefits that could accrue from the study were outlined. Appointments were made with eight teachers per school but in all six schools I interviewed between five to seven teachers. It was during the June examinations, so some of them excused themselves due to a lot of marking. However, the interviews were conducted on the scheduled dates with the participants that were present. I designed short open-ended questions because the intention was to promote the discussion. Each focus group lasted for 60 minutes. Refreshments were provided at the end of each focus group interview as a token of appreciation for having taken their time to participate in the study.

## 5.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationship among categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:367). Along these lines, this section focuses on presenting the data in an organised manner.

Following the interpretative perspective in this study, the purpose of the data analysis was to interpret, describe and report on the reflections and lived experiences of HODs and teachers as research participants.

I followed the process shown in Figure 4.1 to analyse the data. I read through the data to get an idea of what it was all about. I made sense of the data and wrote codes in the margin. The text was divided into segments of information and the segments were analysed to come up with codes. I made lists of 30-40 codes. I then compared the codes for overlapping descriptions and reduced them to 20. I refined the coding system, looked for patterns and identified six themes.

Matthews and Ross (2010:373) state that, to ensure that our analysis is credible and transparent to others, we need analytical approaches that are:

- **Systematic and comprehensive**: I followed a set of procedures that was applied to all cases and all the data.
- **Grounded**: I made sure that I did not change the data throughout the analysis.
- **Dynamic**: My approach was dynamic and flexible and allowed for changes as ideas and themes emerged as part of working process.
- **Accessible**: I made sure that her interpretations would be understood by others.

In the next section, the biographical data of the participants are presented.

### 5.3.1 Biographical Data of Participants

The biographical data of the HODs who participated in the semi-structured, in-depth interviews and teachers for the focus group interviews are presented and discussed in the next sections. For ethical reasons, the names used for participants are pseudonyms and participants are referred to as the HOD number followed by department's name and teachers are represented with a T followed by the subject and department's name. Focus group is indicated as FG. The biographical data of the HOD's is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: HODs Participants of In-depth Individual Interviews

| | | **TS** | **US** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Department | Commerce | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Mathematics | 2 | 1 | 3 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Language | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| | Natural Sciences | | 1 | 1 |
| | Art | | 1 | 1 |
| | Social Sciences | | 1 | 1 |
| | Total | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| Gender | Men | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| | Women | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | Total | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| Years of teaching experience | 15-20 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| | 20-25 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| | 25-30 | 2 | | 2 |
| | 30-35 | 1 | | 1 |
| | Total | 6 | 6 | 12 |

As indicated in Table 5.1, eight men and four women were interviewed. No attempt was made to balance the gender because participation was voluntary. Overall, 12 HODs participated in the study. The table also shows four males and two female participants from township schools and four men and two women were from urban schools. One HOD was from the Commerce Department (Accounting, Business Studies and Economics), two HODs were from Mathematics department and three HODs were from the Language department (English, Afrikaans and isiZulu) were from township schools. Table 5.2 also shows that one HOD was from the Commerce Department (Accounting, Business Studies and Economics), one from Mathematics department, one from the Language department (English, Afrikaans and isiZulu) one from the Natural Sciences department (Life Sciences, Physical Science), one from the Arts department and one from the Social Sciences department (Geography, History) participated in the study. Their years of teaching experience ranged between 15 to 35 years. Table 5.2 provides the biographical data of the teachers who participated in the focus group interview.

Table 5.2: Teachers as Participants of Focus Group Interviews

| | | TS | US | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Department | Commerce | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| | Maths | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| | Language | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| | Natural Sciences | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| | Social Sciences | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| | Other | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | Total | 18 | 18 | 36 |
| Gender | Men | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| | Women | 13 | 13 | 26 |
| | Total | 18 | 18 | 36 |
| Years of teaching experience | 10-15 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | 15-20 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| | 20-25 | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| | 25-30 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | 30-35 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| | Total | 18 | 18 | 36 |

Table 5.2 describes the profile of the teachers involved in the focus group interviews. Overall 36 teachers participated in the study. As Table 5.2 shows, eight teachers were from the commerce department (Accounting, Business Studies and Economics), nine teachers from the Language department (English, Afrikaans and isiZulu), five teachers from Maths department (Maths), six teachers from Natural Sciences department (Life Sciences, Physical Sciences), five teachers from Social Sciences department (Geography, History) and three teachers from other departments (Technology, Life Orientation and Tourism). The table also shows that most teachers who participated in the study taught Language and Commerce.

As far as their gender is concerned, 10 men and 26 women participated in the study. Regarding the teaching experience of these teachers, the experience of participants ranged from 10-35 years.

### 5.3.2 Interview Data

In the next sections, data obtained through the interview schedules from HODs and teachers are discussed in accordance with the headings in the data collection process (Appendix B & C). During the interviews, HODs and teachers were probed on their perceptions and experiences of the CAPS implementation, curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance, advantages and disadvantages of the CAPS. In addition to this, they were asked to elaborate on what more could be done to improve Grade 12 learner performance. In the next sections, data from the in-depth individual interviews are presented. Only the most salient responses per question are reported verbatim; the rest of the raw verbatim data were summarised, recorded and saved. The following responses were received.

5.3.2.1 In-depth Individual Interview's Data

The following section indicates the data of the interviews conducted with 12 HODs. The questions as indicated on the interview schedule were followed in presenting the data.

**i) How do you perceive and experience the implementation of the CAPS in South Africa?**

On this question, all the HODs agreed that the CAPS has benefits, although there were some concerns and reservations. They indicated that most emphasis was on learners acquiring skills so that they would become productive members of society. However, there are few grey areas that still need to be polished. They believed that the CAPS had not been thoroughly researched. Among their reservations, the quality of the learners the CAPS was producing was a concern. Many learners were unable to cope at university and they dropped out during their first year. Comments from some of the participants were as follows:

> *CAPS does not even prepare them for university level hence lot of number of dropouts in the universities but with Bantu Education it was easy for me. After passing Grade 12, I fitted correctly in the, in the, in the, society. But for now, we have a lot of learners and most the learners, for them to be qualified for the courses that they do they have to go for bridging course first, that's the problem with CAPS. I think we have to fix the assessment here and there* (Creative Arts, Tourism and Consumer Studies teacher, TS3HOD1).

*These learners that we are producing, how many of them drop during first year at university level, how many drop, what is the reason? They are not prepared, we just throw them like that, they are raw* (Mathematics teacher, US3HOD1).

On the same question, most participants complained about the workload and the congestion of concepts. They complained that there was too much work that needed to be covered in a short space of time. The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement was loaded with work for teachers as well as for the learners. There was a lot of continuous assessment. Teachers sometimes focused too much on the topics that had been included in the SBAs, and then they did not pay much attention to the whole content. Heads of Departments also added that they concentrated more on paperwork which in turn consumed their teaching time.

*I'm 26 years this year neh, teaching English. Presently we are just here to teach but at the back of our mind teaching is not done like it was done before. We concentrate more on paperwork than on learners, than on imparting knowledge to those learners. Every day there is a paper that you must receive, every day there is…, you know my office is full of paper okay it's work I understand but if you can ask me what's in here, what's in…, I have got eight boxes, what's in here, what's in here, it's all papers that I need to have time for them instead of time in class* (English teacher, TS1HOD1).

*The workload is too much for the learners and it is not only for Grade 12s. I have a Grade 2 boy, iyoo, every day when he comes home it's a lot of work and he is in Grade 2. Every day, I think the whole system is hectic. It's a lot, it's a lot. Yaah, my problem is that there is too much content. There is also a lot of paperwork, filing, recording, so many, and it diverts the attention of the teacher* (Life Sciences teacher, US1HOD1).

Thus the essence is that HOD's recommended that Grade 12 teachers should not be overloaded with other classes so that they could be given enough time to concentrate on Grade 12 learners. They indicated that Grade 12 teachers do not rest and they do not earn extra cash for their hard work.

**ii) What curriculum factors do you think contribute to poor Grade 12 learner performance? Please elaborate each factor.**

On this question, curriculum factors contributing to poor Grade 12 learner performance were the timeframe, the calibre of learners, progression, medium of instruction, poor foundations, low standards and assessment.

a) Time frame

All the HODs mentioned that the time allocated to complete the syllabus is not enough. The periods that the teachers were given to make sure that they finished the syllabus were insufficient. They were always rushing against the time irrespective of whether the learners understood or not. The SBAs in certain subjects were written on a specific day but the big problem was that learners in the same class, in the same school and in other schools did not have the same competence. They suggested that the DBE needs to restructure and revisit the curriculum because the learners coming from Grade 11 were not ready for Grade 12 work. They further indicated that the time allocated to complete the syllabus is not in line with the ATP. Their responses were as follows:

> *Okay, number one, what I noticed towards…, do you know that now we just finished term 2 okay, but do you know that when we open term 3, the learners will only have three weeks to learn isn't it, and then after that they start prelim and you know when they start with prelim they are free to go home, so when do we finish the content for term 3 in those three weeks, and then even in term 2, do you know that we didn't like finish like completely because we didn't have enough time because we started the tests six weeks into the term you know, so we didn't have enough time to finish off all the work for term 2. So, my thinking is that you know on paper it looks like we have got a lot of time but the actual time between teacher and learner is not there. In those three weeks, we still have end of the term tests, we still have projects in order for these learners to have marks for term 3, so it's like a lot of work in a short period of time* (Life Sciences teacher, US1HOD1).

> *You know we have the ATP that says at this day you must finish but let educators be given a chance to help those ones that are struggling, let us not have curriculum on paper, ATP on paper, finish it while learners don't know a thing. The CAPS curriculum sometimes clashes with the period of examination and tests; you find the ATP has overlaps. It overlaps to the examinations because according to the ATP the examination should've started 12 June and we already started on the second of June, so then what about that week's work* (Civil Technology teacher, TS3HOD1).

From this discussion, it is clear that there is too much work but little time available. Teachers are always fighting for extra time because without extra classes they cannot finish the syllabus.

b) Calibre of learners

The participants mentioned that the calibre of learners in Grade 12 lack commitment towards their school work. They do not communicate with the teachers anymore; even raising a hand in class is a problem. They also commented that the learners do not do their homework. If they do not do their homework, it means that practice was not being done particularly in subjects like Accounting and Mathematics where practice is essential. They believe that everyone is doing enough but the problem is the type of learners. Learners do not care and are easily distracted. They are not eager to learn compared to learners in the past. Resources were scarce then, but currently, learners have everything, textbooks, resource materials, study guides and information technology, but they are still not committed. They do not participate in class activities, and do not even copy notes on the board. They will take the cell phone and take pictures. They are extremely lazy. They do not want to do anything. They do not care about school and are only there because their parents said they must come to school. On top of that, they are protected by the law, they have too many rights and no responsibility at all. Examples of the responses were as follows:

> *Our children are not dedicated to their education, it's only a few you know. In class you will be surprised to get 50 learners and then only eight or 10 shows interest in their school work and the rest they just come, so that is one factor that is taking us out of way and it influences those poor results* (English teacher, TS1HOD1).

> *The calibre of the learners that we are having eish, these learners they want to be spooned and CAPS really needs someone who goes extra mile in terms of interaction with the books so these learners sometimes they don't want to do their homework, you just have to push them. CAPS is a good program but with the wrong learners. These learners don't want to do their homework, that one is a serious one and there is little that we can do* (Mathematics teacher, US3HOD1).

The HODs mentioned that the CAPS produced learners who could not read and write. They indicated that the CAPS did not allocate time for reading and teachers had to make plans on their own to cater for reading. Here is what they had to say:

> *As an educator who is 15 years in the field, and CAPS found me here, I have seen a huge difference in terms of NATED 550, with CAPS, learners are unable to read and write, they are unable to construct sentences, you know when you are in class teaching, you need to cover all the lesson objectives, in that one hour that you have, you need to do writing, speaking and listening* (English teacher, TS2HOD2).

> *Our learners don't read anymore, reading is the major problem, and that makes our children when they reach Grade 12 they want to do ama (the) applications they can't even fill a form, they can't understand the language. They have to find somebody to do that for them. And the world out there needs a person who is in a position to express himself or herself, be in a position to read documents* (Civil Technology teacher, TS3HOD1).

As already indicated by the HODs, it is true that learners nowadays are not interested in their school work. There is no culture of learning. It is imperative that learners must do their homework because it enhances their understanding. The HODs recommended that reading must be brought back to our schools. Libraries need to be revamped and media centres brought back.

c) Progression

Eleven (11) out of 12 HODs were totally against progression because it is a major contributor to Grade 12 poor learner performance. They mentioned that learners are aware that they could not repeat the same grade twice and simply stop working. They are lazy and also have a negative attitude towards their school work because they know that the department would push them into the next grade without having met the promotion requirements. Marks are added for these learners to meet the progression requirements and as a result, learners do not care about their school work and even miss classes without any reason. Progression increase the teachers' workload because they have to deal with the learners who had failed the previous grades and provide interventions to try to get them up to speed. They believed that progression would have long-term effects because we would end up with an uneducated nation that progressed from grade to grade without acquiring knowledge or skills needed for the economy. The HODs recommended that progression should be stopped so that the learners would realise that, in order for them to go to the next grade, they must work hard. Their comments were as follows:

> *Firstly, the poor performance of the Grade 12 is mainly of the progression introduced because you will find the learners from primary school Grade 8's, when they arrive here, they've got challenges because it is secondary school and you find them not coping and then because of the progression marks are added to their final marks they proceed from Grade 8 to Grade 9 and even in Grade 9 we give them a certain percentage, then they proceed to go and do Grade 12* (Civil Technology teacher, TS3HOD1).

*Progression of learners affect us negatively. Progressing the learners because of the age or repeating, it's not healthy because we keep on pushing the problem to the next grade. If they failed Grade 8, how do they pass Grade 9, how?* (Life sciences teacher, US1HOD1).

Although most HODs commented that progression should be stopped because it created many challenges, TS1HOD2 Social Sciences believed that progression benefit children in the sense that an older child could not be kept back in a younger age group in a certain grade to avoid harming their self-esteem. He added that when some of these learners got to Grade 12, they do realise that they had been playing all along and started to be serious. He suggested, however, that there must be strict criteria for progression because these learners were not up to Grade 12 standard.

d) Medium of Instruction

Township school HODs complained that learners do not understand English which affected other subjects as well and contribute to poor learner performance. They commented that even those who could read, still do not understand the language. They cannot interpret or analyse questions on their own. Their responses were as follows:

*I think one of the contributing factors can be that they are doing English as a First Additional and I don't want to tell you lies they can't construct sentences, they can't read. In Grade 10, I was able to construct sentences, I was able to comprehend, read with understanding, my handwriting was neat and legible because at primary they were teaching handwriting, so there are so many discrepancies with OBE part. CAPS we are still experiencing that learners are not reading with understanding the question, you know you could tell that language is a barrier and, if a learner experiences problems in terms of language and other subjects are being taught in English, definitely is going to become very serious problem* (English teacher, TS2HOD1).

*Medium of instruction which is English. Some learners cannot understand the language itself and another one is writing and reading. To be able to read and write it's a difficulty. You find a learner in Grade 12 can't even spell a simple word, sentence construction in Grade12, those are the challenges that we have. These learners it doesn't mean that they don't understand they don't know the concepts, because of this language barrier, if I can swap and teach them in Zulu, that child will understand*

*me better, because of the language barrier, the content subjects they suffer* (Civil Technology teacher, TS3HOD1).

Hence, the HODs recommended that the culture of reading must be restored. It is true that the more books the learners can read, the more they can understand the language.

e) Poor Subject Content Foundation

Most HODs complained that learners had not acquired the required the learning competencies in foundation phase (Grades R-3) and there was no way that they could thus perform well in Grade 12. They indicated that there was too much emphasis on Grade 12 while the lower grades were being neglected. They suggested that learners must be taught how to write neatly and legibly at primary school where they were taught handwriting. They also recommended that learners with learning barriers must be identified at primary school and dealt with accordingly instead of pushing the problem on to high school teachers. Their responses were as follows:

*The problem is, we expect learners to do well in Grade 12 but the problem that we have is, our learners are in Grade 12 but unfortunately are not ready to be in Grade 12, for example, our foundation phase is not good because our foundation phase does not prepare our learners for Grade 12, for instance, you find that still we have learners who are in Grade 12 who cannot even read or write. It doesn't help for you to have a very beautiful house with a weak foundation and then you put a nice roof up there, it's not good because our results we don't have good foundation but we expect results in Grade 12. That's why our emphasis is on Grade 12 with SSIP, so that is the problem with the CAPS* (Creative Arts, Tourism and Consumer Studies teacher, TS3HOD1).

*Let us focus on the primary education, not even primary education, let us go even further, early childhood development because black children in the location, are not going to the right structures in order for them to develop their motor skills. Let us not focus on Grade 12s because we are losing this kids because we do not focus ka (in the) early childhood development. If it's done properly, I'm definitely sure that those kids are going to be better learners when they get to Grade 12. Go back to basics* (Physical Science teacher, US2HOD2).

f) Low Standards

The participants mentioned that standards are very low. These low standards made the learners loaf because it was easy to meet the requirements. These discouraged learners from putting in extra effort. They believed that the DBE was more concerned about the number of learners passing Grade 12 than the quality of the pass rate. Their responses were as follows:

> *I don't know why did they have to lower the promotional requirements to such a level that a learner can pass ka (with) 30%. That's why gape le bana ba dlala (again these learners are playing) because, waitsi (you know) when you are working for a 50, you put in an effort but if you are working for a 30, you always say aaag maan 30 ke eng ke tla e thola (it's nothing I will get it) that's why probably ba sa e thole (they don't get it)* (Social Science teacher, TS1HOD2).

> *We are saying you got 100% pass rate and we are counting the 30%. I don't want to see you packing groceries at Pick 'n Pay. Even tertiary who is going to admit you with 30%, it's a problem, but I don't know why they say it's a pass mark. They are worried about the pass rates neh, which is a problem but personally I would take something from 50% and above, at least that person can do something* (Mathematics teacher, US3HOD1).

g) Assessment

It seems the SBA help learners to accumulate marks before they write examinations. In some subjects, learners are allowed to interact with their books which seems easier for them to get more marks. Other participants complained that some of the tasks do not prepare learners for the examinations especially the projects based on research. They mentioned that sometimes they are too easy and totally different from the examination. However, all language participants including English, Afrikaans and isiZulu agreed that SBAs are beneficial to the learners because what they do in the SBAs is what comes out in the examinations. Here is what they had to say:

> *This idea of learners of, when it comes to SBA neh, learners are supposed to do SBA, say for example, they are writing SBA today on a Friday and you as an educator you are expected to mark it, and a learner is absent on a Friday for whatever reason neh, you are not supposed to give a learner a zero mark, you are supposed to make them to write the same task. Also at the end of the year when you are supposed to submit*

*the SBA component now you are told that no learner must get a mark less than 8, so it means if a learner got for example five or seven you have to account why that learner got that mark for whatever reason, what educators do to be on the safe side, they increase the marks. They don't want to account, say why should I write a letter that so and so got six or whatever mark it is* (Mathematics teacher, TS2HOD2).

*There has always been an issue with SBAs, between SBAs, how learners perform at the SBA level and examination. The problem with the SBA tasks is that they are repetitive, if they are repetitive it means the learners will get the information from somewhere, then when you mark you find that they have copied you see, so it means they should change them every year* (Social Science teacher, US1HOD2).

The SBA is a burden to teachers because they have to account for why learners got a low mark or why they did not write the SBA. This takes away the responsibility from the learner and burdens the teachers with accountability.

**iii) Think back over all the years that you have been teaching and tell me your challenges as a teacher**

On this question, challenges identified by participants were overcrowded classes, discipline and lack of parental support. Their responses were as follows.

a) Overcrowded Classes

Only participants from township schools complained about overcrowding as a contributing factor in Grade 12 learner performance. Overcrowded classes make it difficult for the teacher to give individual attention to learners. The HODs responses were as follows:

*Our classes are overcrowded, if we were given the limited number of learners, I think CAPS will be of a good benefit to learners, even the results would be of a very high standard, we won't panic when they come out. But the challenges that we have in class, overcrowding, it's the one factor that is disturbing education in class. They can't perform to their ability* (English teacher, TS1HOD1).

*Overcrowding is my biggest challenge. Mathematics is a subject that needs individual attention every now and then therefore it is not possible. Overcrowding leads to high failure rate and also causes discipline problems* (Mathematics teacher, TS2HOD2).

b) Discipline

Most participants complained that the learners are not disciplined. Learners are intentionally not doing their work because they know that nothing would be done to them. They do not have respect for their teachers and the teachers are becoming demoralised. The HODs responses were as follows:

> *One other thing it's neh, it's not CAPS related but it's a general thing neh, nobody seems to come out clearly in terms of discipline neh, what is that that we need to do to see to it that our challenges at schools are minimised, because giving tasks and learner not performing it's because of the fact that they know gore (that) there is no consequence for my action and yet because this education is learner-centred, the child is never wrong wa (you) understand* (Social Sciences teacher, TS1HOD2).

> *Challenge number one, you know what, our learners are not disciplined. They know that teachers cannot go beyond a certain limit, they know their rights. This thing of rights, the learner practice those even in our classroom. You are in charge and here is the learner with rights you know, so ill-discipline. If I send him out it's also a problem, you know. It's against the law. Now here is the learner that is talking continuously and I want to teach okay. Here is the learner that is busy trying to attract …, you know there are certain learners who want attention from the rest of the learners and you also want attention and you are busy competing for the attention of the what, of the learners. I wish there was…, those learners are getting out of hand, yaah they are getting out of hand and sometimes they kill the spirit of the teacher* (Life Sciences teacher, US1HOD1).

c) Lack of Parental Support

All participants complained that parents are not involved in their children's education. Once they dropped them at school, it becomes the school's problem. They do not attend any meetings. They only come at the end of the year, when the child had failed, to find out why and to ask for progression.

> *The parents too, the parents are not playing ball, they are not playing their role, they sent their children to school for educators to take care of every aspect of the learner. I think, we need to…, each one needs to play his role, parents play their role in nurturing that is, the child* (Social Sciences teacher, TS1HOD2).

> *Parents are not playing role; they are not actually meeting educators halfway. Parents must sign their children's book every day, every day you sign, you will see no learner*

*will come to school without homework. Parents must take this education system seriously. Some parents will say hae I don't have time for that I am busy* (Social Science teacher, US1HOD2).

**iv) Think back over the past years of how our curriculum has changed from Bantu syllabus, to C2005, to NCS and now CAPS. State advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned curriculum**.

a) Advantages of the CAPS

Most HODs agreed that the CAPS is a good curriculum because it has lots of activities that help learners to internalise knowledge. They learn different skills; for example, they do research in preparation for tertiary studies.

*CAPS is very liberal, independent, we, we teach children to explore things on their own like in the olden days we were never exposed to go and make a research, bring a report. There was that rote learning, you cram a recitation. Nowadays we just give instruction, go do this, we want to see if you can and then come back with your report. You report to the class, it's just free, it's accommodating. Its teaching children to think on their feet. Take for instance English, we conduct interviews like we are doing now, there is a lesson about that. It was not done in the olden days; I wouldn't even have an exposure of how interview look like. When they talk of a panel, I wouldn't know what a panel is. I knew there was an interview but that exposure neh of saying this is a panel where an interview is conducted. CAPS is allowing learners in class, reviewing a story that they see on TV, you tell them, look at Tabalaza this week or Generations, we are reviewing tomorrow in class. Learners know what is to review, unlike in the olden days, Bantu Education, we did not even have TV. No teacher will even allow you to talk in her class, no discussions whatsoever. There is flexibility with CAPS* (English teacher, TS1HOD1).

*It's more informative, especially for our learners. It's more of skills related, broader knowledge, it widens our learners' knowledge. When we look at the Grade 10, their standard, quality of education is more or less equivalent to Grade 12 syllabus of which I believe that if our learners are given more time, when they leave the matric, when they exit matric at least they have the basics for tertiary* (Commerce teacher, US2HOD1).

b) Disadvantages of the CAPS

On this question, lack of resources, unqualified teachers and intervention programmes were identified as disadvantages for the CAPS.

- Lack of Resources

HODs complained that the CAPS need resources for the curriculum to be implemented effectively. Their comments were as follows:

> *Ohooo, yaah, wa dlala (Oh, yeah, you are playing) ex-Model C schools and white schools are resourced and they are well-equipped, ours are lagging far behind yet that's where the change is supposed to happen, you know you bring about change neh, which are supposed to be good, but it becomes er er er…, e ba na le eng, le di (it has what, it has) challenges because immediately you introduce something, you need to bring in also resources that would make that particular type of system to work. Resources di batlega gagolo neh (are extremely important). You know one other thing is that we need working libraries, we can have that is computer labs* (Social Sciences teacher, TS1HOD2).

> *Our school does not have a laboratory so we make use of a small class. As in when we need to do experiments, particularly in Physical science, we do a show of experiments, learners are not engaged in doing that because we don't have a lab. A teacher is actually standing in front of a learner, demonstrating and the opposite is supposed to be true* (Physical Science teacher, US2HOD2).

- Unqualified Teachers

HODs agreed that the training of teachers was done but the time allocated for training was not sufficient to equip them to be able to teach the learners with confidence. Their responses were as follows:

> *Over the past years neh, the biggest challenge neh that I will pick point from the top of my head neh, it's the curriculum changes that are happening. They happen so quickly yet we educators are not properly trained neh. We taking crash courses tsa (of) probably two Saturdays neh or three Saturdays* (Social Sciences teacher, TS1HOD2).

> *You see I think the current education system is rushed in a sense that educators are not trained well. As much as the department is trying to equip educators, me I feel it's*

*not sufficient. If you politicize education, then you know you are actually heading for trouble because educators they go to workshops, they are requested to give inputs, they give their inputs but at the end politicians will tell you that no, this is not correct* (Physical Science teacher, US2HOD2).

- Intervention Programmmes

Intervention programmes are identified as contributing to poor learner performance because they are congested. Their comments were as follows:

*I'm of the opinion that these learners are also saturated like ke gore (it means that) they are over taught, wa thola le gore le nna ke ba batla ka di (you get me, everyone wants to teach them) afternoon until 17:00, 18:00, they don't even have enough time to perform di (their) homework tsa bona. Gape on weekend re modimo ga bona, re ba kenya ka 8:00 re ba ntsha ka 18:00 (Even on weekends we are on top of them, from 8:00 to 18:00)* (Social Sciences teacher, TS1HOD2).

*You know these learners; they don't go home at 14:00 like the rest of the learners. They will stay behind okay, today its Life Science, tomorrow History, the other day its Accounting. When do they go home, late after 16:00 and they need to go by transport, maybe around 17:00 they get home and then do you know that they get tired. They still have to do homework, and when they come to school tomorrow they have not done their homework* (Life Sciences teacher, US1HOD1).

The learners attend intervention programmes every day and even on weekends. Therefore, they do not have time to do their homework or to study because they become exhausted.

**v) What needs improvement in our current curriculum delivery?**

On this question, participants believed that psychologists need to be appointed and that teachers must be involved in curriculum design.

a) Psychologists

Only HODs from township schools mentioned that they needed psychologists in their schools because learners need to be assessed regularly. For example:

*Mmmm, I wonder if I am allowed to say this, we need to include psychologists. People who will give us the basics of how our children think, what do they think, why are they so ignorant with their education. In township schools, we definitely need the DoE to*

*employ psychologists, so that they can be in a position to assess them. You know if a learner is not fit to be in a normal school like this one, those learners must be referred to the specific school* (English teacher, TS1HOD1).

It is true that proper assessment is needed before a learner can go to FET phase to determine whether a learner belongs in a normal school or an FET college.

b) Teacher involvement

All the HODs believed that to improve the results, they need to be involved in the design of the curriculum because they know best as they are the ones interacting with these learners. Their responses were as follows:

*Consultation, consultation, yaah, there's no consultation, we are told all the time what to do, we just have to follow. First, neh before they draw they must get input from teachers, first they must consult teachers, I should not be staying in the boardroom office with ventilated air conditioner and think about teachers and what they want, no, I must go to them. I must go to them and find out their challenges, then from there with all that you are going to gather from them and then you draw up a curriculum for our learners* (Mathematics teacher, TS2HOD2).

*I wish the teacher was given a chance to design a curriculum because this curriculum is being designed by people who are just in the office. I don't know when last did this people enter a classroom and teach. They think they know what we need and they don't. They don't know what we need in the classroom, when they are setting the assessment, the SBA, they don't know the type of learners that we have. I wish they could come up with like teachers, maybe teachers should come together and we try to redesign the curriculum* (Life sciences teacher, US1HOD1).

Consultation with the teachers in curriculum design would yield better results because they know the challenges facing the education system.

**vi) If you were in charge of curriculum development in South Africa and could make one change that would improve Grade 12 learner performance, what would you do?**

All the HODs believe that progression is the biggest contributor to poor learner performance. They feel that if a learner fails the previous grade it is not possible for them to pass the next grade. Their responses were as follows:

*If there will be improvements in our curriculum, firstly they must stop progression, stop progression. Progression can be stopped and learners can be assessed properly, assessing properly, whether this child belong to a school or he has to go to FET* (Civil Technology teacher, TS3HOD1).

*Number one, no progression, that one has to stop. Whether they are over age, whether you repeated, marks or going to the next grade should be by merit, not because you are too old. No that one should stop. Don't push, no, maybe we can push until Grade 9 but from Grade 10; 11 and 12 there shouldn't be any progression, that's the only way we can improve performance because how does a learner fail Grade 10 and 11 and pass Grade 12, no. You know those learners are pulling down the pass percentage so the only way we can improve that is that learners that are in Grade 12 should deserve Grade 12. We shouldn't push the learners there because the teacher, eish, Grade 12 teachers are working* (Life Sciences teacher, US1HOD1).

In order to improve performance, learners should only move from one grade to another provided they achieved the promotion requirements.

vii) What more can we do to improve Grade 12 learner performance?

On this question, the HODs mentioned textbooks and opening of FET colleges as part of improving Grade 12 results.

a) Textbooks

HODs indicated that we needed to go back to a situation where the DBE chose one textbook to be used by all schools just like it used to be before the CAPS was introduced. They mentioned that it is to the advantage of a particular school at the expense of another and they can easily identify which school use which textbook when they are marking Grade 12 examination papers. This is what they had to say:

*One textbook, one prescribed textbook so that we all know gore (that) this is what to expect. Waitsi kena le go bona gore ko marking neh (I always see at marking centre that) you mark one essay neh, kore (that is) same topic but it would be approached differently, wa tseba gape ko History ba tlabe bare(you know with History) you know the memorandum is a guideline, specifically everything will be coming from the memo because you can tell ka di (by the) responses tsa di (of the) learner gore ba ba bala buka e soo (they are reading this book) and you know with some books the fact that is incorrect would be included in that book and learners would respond in that matter*

*and yet o thole gore (you find) that is not correct. How can you blame them because it's not their fault, is the fault of the textbook that's that? So, I think we need to go back to one prescribed textbook* (Social Sciences teacher, TS1HOD2).

*Go back to the basics. We must have one prescribed textbook not schools choosing their own textbook. These new textbooks do not have more information compared to the ones that we used to use in Bantu Education* (Physical Science teacher, US2HOD2).

b) FET colleges for learners

Heads of Departments mentioned that not all learners are academically inclined so more FET colleges needed to be opened. Their comments were as followed:

*Government must be aware of the fact that not all learners are academics. Some learners are very, very good in some craft. The government should provide facilities whereby learners can drop out after Grade 9 and carry on with certain specialist skills that they are extremely good at rather than forcing them to stay up to Grade 12 and not achieving anything. Government must provide relevant facilities, colleges* (English teacher, TS2HOD1).

*I wish we could be taken back to those days where there are colleges, the technical colleges for learners who are hands on. The very same learners who are progressed, some of them are hands-on but now education does not allow them. I would change the system that learners would now can be channeled to colleges right from maybe Grade 8* (Commerce teacher, US2HOD1).

If FET colleges were opened, learners could be channeled accordingly and progression could be stopped.

viii) Is there anything else you would like to mention about curriculum in South Africa and Grade 12 learner's performance?

Heads of Departments indicated their concerns around curriculum change and subjects offered at school level.

a) Curriculum Changes

Heads of Departments indicated that South Africa must stop copying other country's curricula and also stop politicising education by changing curriculum with every new Minister

of Education. They indicated that the curriculum was confusing because, in certain subjects, the curriculum designers had removed some topics and added others some of which had been included in the previous curricula. Their comments were as follows:

> *Ahhh, you know what, neh, I'm firm case, since we are a buying country neh, we bought CAPS from somewhere, we bought OBE from somewhere and all that but if we look at the learners coming from Zimbabwe and all that stuff neh, they seem to be… you know, I don't know which term to use, they are better learned, we need to copy good practices of other countries and also to retain good practices neh from that is the former education system neh. That's why probably most the educators, more especially the one from the old system they've left teaching because of the challenges that come with these changes, more especially bonkgono (grannies), those are the teachers you wanted in the system, mara ke bona ba tswang ko (but they are the ones leaving the) system. They cannot cope wa (you) understand, these changes are coming too fast too quick and yet educators are not properly trained to handle such* (Social Science teacher, TS1HOD2).

> *And also this curriculum, mam, I don't understand it. Why does it keep on changing like this? You know during whatever they are introducing we have done it at school. They are saying this year there is no linear programming, that person is a teacher now they introduce linear programming, next person does not know how to teach linear programming* (Mathematics teacher, US3HOD1).

I noted that when a new curriculum was introduced, teachers were not properly trained and this led to teachers leaving the profession out of frustration.

b) Subject streams

HODs commented that we need to look at the number of subjects we offer at the school level and also check if they are benefiting these learners when they go to tertiary. This is what they had to say:

> *Another thing is, I don't know how we can increase the contact time between the teacher and the learner. I don't know how because there is too much work especially for the Grade 12s. I don't know how we can do that because it is not even possible to increase the number of hours. I wish there was enough time. I can't say reduce the content in Life sciences because which topic do we remove (laughing). You know LO even if you get a level seven it means nothing in their certificate and you know that*

*they pass and it means nothing. Yaah, maybe they must remove some of these subjects. Don't tell the LO teachers (laughing), maybe the problem is not even LO, is the number of subjects we offer in our schools. We give them too many, we cannot even fit them in our timetable. Yaah, maybe we should reduce the number of subjects we are offering* (Life sciences teacher, US1HOD1).

*The Grade 12 performance is not good because there is no use taking subjects that they are not going to get them anywhere. Now you find that the learners are doing eight subjects but you look into university they are quite useless. Some of these subjects are useless like LO, it can be done only up to Grade 9. Learners should only focus on subjects that are useful for their career* (Afrikaans teacher, US3HOD2).

It is thus imperative to look at the number of subjects offered at school level especially because teachers do not have enough time allocated to complete the syllabus.

5.3.2.2 Focus Group Interview's Data

The following section indicates the data of the focus group interviews conducted with 36 teachers from three township schools and three urban schools. One response from the township schools is presented first followed by one response from the urban schools.

**i) How do you perceive and experience the implementation of the CAPS curriculum in South Africa?**

On this question, all the teachers agreed that the CAPS did have benefits, but there were some concerns and reservations. Among their reservations, the quality of the learners the CAPS is producing is a concern as well as the workload and congestion of concepts. Their responses were as follows:

a) Quality of Learners

The participants complained that the CAPS learners are unable to cope at university and drop out during their first year. Comments from some of the participants are as follows:

*Its quality versus quantity on my side, CAPS or maybe the education of nowadays it focuses on quantity, quality is not important anymore, that's why we are going for low pass rate percentage, then whether the learner knows is not important* (English teacher, FG1TS1).

*CAPS does not prepare them for tertiary institutions. Our learners are struggling when they get to university* (Life sciences teacher, FG4US2).

Teachers indicated that the DBE is more concerned about the number of learners passing and not the quality of the passes. The DBE is doing everything in its power to make sure that more learners pass.

b) Workload

On the same question, most participants commented that the CAPS involve too much work and is congested. Their responses were as follows:

*CAPS expect a lot from kids especially the Grade 12s because if you check, within a term, they are supposed to have written about how many tests, for example in all learning areas in a time, is it seven excluding the SBAs and all of us as Grade 12 educators we expect to see our work up to date, so there is a lot really. Maybe we need to reduce the number of SBAs in Grade12. If we can say in a term, Grade 12 learners are supposed to be given one SBA per term plus test* (History teacher, FG6US3).

*The topics are congested into small time. Let me say in Maths I have to teach maybe I have to teach Grades 8 Maths and I have to teach algebraic equations, go na le (there is) expand, go na le (there is) factorisation, go na le (there is) multiplication, go na le (there is) addition, go na le (there is) division, then all they fall under algebraic expression, what about maybe they break it down for another grade they do this and on another grade they do this, maybe if they divide it in Grade 8 do this and on Grade 9 is the continuation of algebraic equation on certain concepts. There are some content congestions, it's a policy that has content congestion. Yes, in Maths, they were having paper 1, 2 and 3. Now we only have paper 1 and 2 but believe you me, the time. All those topics which were in paper 3 are now in paper 2, but they didn't add the time, you get that. We have to squeeze everything in the same ATP* (Mathematics teacher, FG1TS1).

The CAPS content is congested and the time allocated is not enough to cover the workload.

**ii) What curriculum factors do you think contribute to poor Grade 12 learner performance. Please elaborate on each factor.**

On this question, curriculum factors contributing to poor Grade 12 learner performance were timeframe, calibre of learners, progression, medium of instruction, poor foundations, low standards and assessment.

a) Time frame

All the teachers mentioned that the time allocated to complete the syllabus is insufficient. They further indicated that the time allocated to complete the syllabus is not in line with the ATP. Some participants indicated that they were able to complete the syllabus but they left the learners behind while others said they could only finish provided that they organised extra classes. They said that even though the learners had done the SBA for the term, that did not mean that they had finished the work for the term. They taught the topics that appeared on the SBA. With further probing, their comments were as follows:

> *We are able to complete the syllabus under duress. You must speed up the ATP and that results in poor results* (Mathematics teacher, FG1TS1).

> *The first thing I will start with is the Annual Teaching Plan versus the syllabus coverage. We were talking about the SBA recently; you will find that SBA that you are supposed to give the learner covers everything for the term but the date that they are giving us in the ATP they say that you have to give these SBA on the 24th of May whereas the work covers the whole term. The ATP allows us to teach up until the last day of the term which is impossible because learners are writing examinations* (Mathematics teacher, FG5US2).

As already indicated by participants, the time allocated to complete the syllabus is insufficient and they rush through the ATP in order to meet the requirements.

b) Calibre of learners

The participants mentioned that the learners lack commitment towards their school work. They rely on the DBE to push them from one grade to another. They are lazy to read a paragraph so to avoid failure, teachers read with them and analyse word by word, explaining what it meant and breaking down the words for them. Teachers responses were as follows:

*Learners are so lazy, they are wheelbarrows, you leave the wheelbarrow here and come tomorrow you will find the wheelbarrow in the very same place* (isiZulu teacher, FG1TS1).

*We are spoon-feeding these learners and these spoon-feeding doesn't take them anywhere. Once you can leave these learners and say do these on your own, they won't do it. Even in Grade 12, you must teach them as if you are teaching Grade 8's you know* (Business Studies teacher, FG4US2).

It seemed that even if the teachers gave learners homework, 90% of them would not do it which meant they were learning nothing for themselves.

c) Progression

All teachers were totally against progression because it is a major contributor to poor performance in Grade 12. Learners could not pass Grade 12 because they did not have the background. Their comments were as follows:

*These learners are progressed until they reach Grade 12 then in Grade 12 there are no results because from the beginning they didn't understand the work of Grade 8* (isiZulu teacher, FG1TS1).

*Another contributing factor for high failure rate in Grade 12 is progressed learners. Learners are progressed at the end of the day they blame the teachers, the HODs, whoever, but they are the one who are causing all these problems* (Mathematics teacher, FG5US2).

From these comments, it is clear that progressed learners do not have the subject content foundation required to pass Grade 12. As a result, they have a negative attitude towards their school work and make little effort, because they know that they will eventually go to the next grade without even trying.

d) Medium of Instruction

Teachers complained that learners do not understand English and this affected other subjects as well and contribute to poor learner performance. Their comments were as follows:

*Educators are sometimes tempted to cross the line, to switch so that learners can understand, but you can imagine, they must first understand English and then they*

*can deal with the syllabus. Maths lit is purely English, first you must understand English then you must learn to do the calculations, so English is a big thing* (Mathematics teacher, FG1TS1).

*First of all, language barrier, because our learners cannot express themselves in English and they lack some of, it's not that they do not have the content or they cannot understand the question, it's just that the problem is the language, they cannot understand what is asked there* (Life sciences teacher, FG6US3).

Participants indicated that if learners do not understand English, it would eventually affect other subjects as well, especially where they had to interpret and analyse.

e) Poor Subject Content Foundations

Most teachers complained that learners did not acquire the required basics in the Foundation Phase and that they could thus not perform well in Grade 12. They believed that the CAPS focus mainly on assessment rather than teaching and learning. There is little time for teaching and learning, but too much time is allocated to assessment and learners are being assessed without enough knowledge. Their responses were as follows:

*In Mathematics Grade 8 and 9, learners don't have the knowledge of what they are learning about. Yaah, you talk about fractions and you assume that the learners they know what the fraction is, how to add or subtract fractions only to find that they don't have any idea of what is happening there. They come from Grade 7, 6, 5 without any knowledge* (Mathematics teacher, TS3FG3).

*The learners here must be prepared as early as Grade 1. We must groom them as early as Grade 1 so that even if our workload is equal in Grade 12 we don't feel the stress because we receive prepared learners* (Accounting teacher, FG5US2).

It appears that if learners are not thoroughly prepared in the lower grades, they would eventually struggle in high school.

f) Low Standards

The participants mentioned that South Africa is literally a laughing stock to many countries around the world. South Africa is known for very low educational standards. They indicated that the CAPS produce learners who could not go to university because of a 30% pass. They were also concerned about the mark adjustments and condonation of Mathematics if

learners earned 20%. They suggested that from Grade 10, the pass percentage should be 50%. Their responses were as follows:

> *The performance of Grade 12 in general is very low. You can find that the school may get 98% but the average is actually 30%. Its quantity not quality. And we can rectify this may be in Grade 10. If we can make sure that the learners who are going to Grade 11 pass with 50%* (Geography teacher, FG3TS3).

> *Then the concept of our pass mark, I think that one is a big challenge. I don't understand how developers develops a curriculum, make sure that the pass rate is 30% and you go to university it is 50%. So they are simply saying an African child is supposed to get a matric certificate and never go to university. So how then are we going to develop new engineers* (Physical science teacher, FG4US1).

These low standards make the learners dull and lazy.

g) Assessment

The SBA help learners to accumulate marks before they write examinations. In some subjects, learners are allowed to use their books which made it easier for them to get more marks than they deserve. Other participants complained that some of the tasks does not prepare learners for the examination especially the research-based projects. They mentioned that sometimes the SBAs are too easy and totally different from the examination. However, all language participants including English, Afrikaans and isiZulu, agreed that SBAs are beneficial to the learners because what they do in the SBAs is what is tested in the examinations. Here is what they had to say:

> *I think the SBAs are not very helpful because the SBAs normally concentrate on certain topics maybe two topics and then you will find five topics in the examination, so I think there is a lack somewhere. That is why most learner pass SBAs more than the examination because is only concentrating on few topics. And they are easy, in most cases they are easier than the examination* (Technology teacher, TS3FG3).

> *I think the concept of SBA is not useful in any way because if you compare it with the examination, those are two different things, again it goes back to how they introduced CAPS. The level of questions that we set on a school level, those are two different things. SBA, they are very easy* (Physical Science teacher, FG4US1).

Some participants felt that the SBAs should be removed'. Some suggested that the department must hire people who are knowledgeable in setting the question papers to set the papers from term 1 up to term 4.

**iii) Think back over all the years that you have been teaching and tell me your challenges as a teacher.**

On this question, challenges identified by participants were overcrowded classes, discipline and lack of parental support.

a) Overcrowded classes

Participants complained about overcrowded classes as a contributing factor towards poor learner performance in Grade 12. They indicated that teacher-pupil ratio in black schools is higher than in white schools. They believe that progression leads to overcrowded classes. Overcrowded classes make it difficult for the teacher to give individual attention to learners. Their responses were as follows:

> *The size of the classroom, in most the cases you find that learners are overcrowded, that thing leads to poor performance because learners don't get individual attention* (Life Sciences teacher, FG1TS1).

> *Maybe I am biased because you know with black schools the teacher people ratio is still abnormal in our schools especially the black schools. Grade 9 up until especially our Grade 10's, 11's and 12s are overcrowded. These classes ratio is 1:50 or 1:60 you see* (History teacher, FG6US3).

It seems as if that rural schools are overcrowded compared to their urban counterparts and poor performance is experienced as a result of a lack of individual attention.

b) Discipline

Most participants complained that the learners were not disciplined. The government gave them too many rights and the teachers were not protected. Learners knew that there was nothing the teachers could do if they do not do their homework. Their responses were as follows:

> *The other issue is that issue of discipline, to say more power is given to the learners, they have more rights of which as a teacher you become helpless to say at the end of the day so what, there is nothing I can do. They have knowledge of that, they are*

*more informed about their rights they've got less responsibilities* (Social Science teacher, FG1TS1).

*Another challenge is discipline. You see the constitution does not allow us to use corporal punishment, not that we want to do it, but there are no any other effective methods to discipline these kids. They know they are protected even more than the teachers themselves hence it compromises us on delivery of our duties especially on discipline. These kids are not disciplined and attentive to understand concepts. It becomes a bit difficult because if they concentrate, they understand better, so I think there should be a balance there* (Mathematics teacher, FG6US3).

It seems as if there are no effective methods to discipline the learners. The system of merits and demerits does not have any impact because there are no consequences for negative behaviour, even though records had to be kept.

c) Lack of Parental Support

All participants complained that parents are not involved in their children's education. They do not give their children the support they need. They don't even attend any meeting.

*I believe that also the parents neh (okay), parents do not give enough support towards their children. Us as educators we are expected to support and intervene these kids whereas they don't get the support at home. So I believe that we are the only one who is working with these children but at home they don't get any support. So I believe that that's a challenge that we are facing at time you find that a learner didn't come to school. If you make follow-up with the parent, she won't be able to come due to his or her work that she is doing at home* (Physical science teacher, TS3FG3).

*The parents are not very much involved in their kid's school work. They don't come to school, they don't collect reports, all those things its almost common in many of these schools* (Life sciences teacher, FG5US2).

If parents are not involved in the children's education, it appears that children neglect their school work.

**iv) Think back over the past years of how our curriculum has changed from Bantu syllabus, to OBE, to Senior Certificate to NCS and now CAPS. State advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned curriculum.**

a) Advantages of the CAPS

Most teachers agreed that the CAPS covers worthwhile content and the skills are very much better than those required by the NCS. They indicated that, with the CAPS, it is easy for the DBE to track the teachers who are not teaching effectively.

> *In Mathematics, CAPS has improved versus NCS. In Mathematics, we are doing what we call calculus, and I think in future will do integrations. It's a very powerful tool for varsity entry. Physical science is up there. We doing serious experiments that will make them competent especially in chemistry and science, so CAPS is content powerful* (Mathematics teacher, FG1TS1).

> *It is helpful somehow because you are able to track teachers who are not teaching, but at the same time CAPS does not give us that opportunity for us, to to…, you know, for proper intervention especially as far as those learners who did not assimilate with the subject matter, so you cannot go back and say yaah, let me go back and revisit the topic again because you have to finish on this day so eya (it) disadvantages* (Economics teacher, FG5US2).

Based on the participants' comment, the CAPS is a good curriculum which is well structured.

b) Disadvantages of the CAPS

On this question, lack of resources, unqualified teachers, unqualified facilitators and intervention programs were identified as disadvantages for the CAPS. Here is what they had to say:

- Lack of Resources

All the teachers complained that the CAPS needed resources but most schools were under-resourced. With further probing, participants commented as follows:

> *Mina (me) what I see is CAPS wasn't made for conditions like South African conditions especially the African conditions where let me give you an example, primary school in a rural area and urban area is not the same. CAPS is not mend for big classes. It is not mend for under-resourced schools, is not mend for teachers who*

*are not trained properly, so the impact of its own applicability itself, the CAPS applicability itself doesn't suit these learners, too much work, short periods, big classes, few teachers, big schools few resources, you see the problem with CAPS its impact on these learners to pass properly at the end of the year* (Afrikaans teacher, FG4US1).

*For instance, Isizulu neh, they have listening comprehension, at times we don't need to read for the learners, at times you can play a radio and they listen to what… We don't have all these things* (isiZulu teacher, FG3TS3).

Resources enhance teaching and learning so it is imperative for the government to address the problem of resources.

- Underqualified Teachers

Participants indicated that there were new topics that were added in some subjects but the teachers are not equipped to teach those topics. Even new teachers from universities were not thoroughly trained. Their responses were as follows:

*In my side in relation to CAPS and the curriculum we have new topics, like for example there is a topic that carries plus minus 20 marks in Geography map work, of which most educators we are still learning also, it's a new topic, the GIS part, and it requires software to be included in schools, it requires practical work, like we need practical equipment to educate learners using it, we only do the crush theoretical course like I would try to implement like let's say paper GIS to show how are layers implemented in Geography when we do land survey of which for learners it becomes just a classroom experience, they never have enough time to go out and view it, it's only interested educators who will go through that, so most educators will just brush it off and say no, I'm not going to teach this because I was never trained for this* (Social Sciences teacher, FG1TS1).

*I think the training program should be put at universities, the way they train teachers, so that these youngsters coming to the profession now are trained because as my colleague said earlier these kids who come from universities have no due as to what is really happening because whatever they are taught there and the method of teaching are totally different from reality. So, I suppose the idea is that this training programme must be put there in the universities first* (Tourism teacher, FG4US1).

This indicates that teachers are not competent in the subject matter.

- Underqualified Facilitators

They also indicated their concern about DBE facilitators who are not qualified. They felt demoralised if they had facilitators who could not answer their questions. Their comments were as follows:

> *If you check our district facilitators, they are also in the dark. I mean the lady comes here and then I ask her few questions, you can see that she is actually just trying because she's got a job. She has been given a job because she is trying to say something. She doesn't know, she doesn't know. If you check them they always saying they, they, they. They don't even know who? It's not us; it's the department. If you go to the department they say facilitators know* (Afrikaans teacher, FG4US1).

> *Facilitators do not know the content. We had a workshop and the facilitator could not speak English but she was facilitating English. She didn't even know the meaning of a verb and a noun* (English teacher, FG6US3).

It is imperative that facilitators are thoroughly trained to be able to address the teachers' concerns.

- Intervention programmes

Intervention programmes are identified as contributing to poor learner performance because the content is congested and the learners become exhausted. Participants complained that they are not trained on how to conduct intervention. They felt that the progression of the learners added the burden of dealing with learners who had learning barriers. They indicated that these learners who are in intervention programmes are mostly problematic learners who did not care about school. This is what they had to say:

> *For learners who are progressed they said we must intervene. We must come up with intervention program like you teach these learners but still they are not giving us another strategy that is different from the one that we know of teaching them, try to teach them this way to see if they can do it or not, or use these material to see if they can do it or not. The department is stressing us* (Social Science teacher, FG2TS2).

> *Maybe if they can come up with the strategy of how to implement intervention thing in a school with these kids that are… that are having barriers. Because you can't say to a person, implement this whereas you, you don't even know how to implement it. That's the problem, but then they come, they want intervention, they want proof,*

*because they need to send some documents. Maybe take educators to some workshop on how to intervene, which means these CAPS curriculum is too much for us if we are going to intervene the kids, is too much, but then we are expected to finish the syllabus* (Physical Science teacher, FG6US3).

Participants agreed that interventions added to teachers' workload because it came with additional paperwork.

**v) What needs improvement in our current curriculum?**

On this question, all participants believed that to improve the results, teachers needs to be involved in the design of the curriculum because they know the learners better. They are the ones faced with the challenges on a daily basis and they are the ones interacting with these learners. They believe that they could formulate the best policy based on C2005 (an OBE approach) and the CAPS, because they already know that assessment must be outcome-based. They suggested that curriculum matters must be left to professionals. Their responses were as follows:

*Another thing in their plan in changing the curriculum, the biggest mistake that they are doing, they don't involve teachers. We are not involved, we are just being told that his is a new curriculum and this is how it works. So they need to come back to us. Involve teachers as to what should be done, what's best for our learners, so they must stop taking curriculum from other countries* (English teacher, FG2TS2).

*If they take teachers right now and put them in a …, give them two weeks to come up with policy that suit South Africa, they will come up with the policy. Teachers, we are not talking about somebody who's got a degree, whose sitting in an office, teachers, they must choose teachers who can sit, who have been in the classroom. I'm telling you they will come up with something that is based on C2005 (OBE) and the CAPS. They will formulate something that will work* (Afrikaans teacher, FG4US1).

Teachers believe that they could come up with the best policy that would suit the learners because they are aware of all the challenges facing the education system.

**vi) If you were in charge of curriculum development in South Africa and could make one change that would improve Grade 12 learner performance, what would you do?**

Participants indicated that they would do away with technology. They felt that it was useless for the government to give learners tablets without providing the necessary resources that would go along with those tablets. For example, learners could not use those tablets to do research because there was no access to the internet so it was useless to carry them. Those tablets only had previous question papers and some extra materials for studying. The tablets were supposed to be given to both learners and educators but they only gave them to learners. For example, the tablets were supposed to be used in conjunction with smart boards but only a few educators went for training on this technology and the rest could not use it. Their comments were as follows:

> *I would do away with the tablets, smart board is okay, but the tablet remember our children are coming from disadvantaged community and they become excited when they carry those tablets and I find it not fair for us to give those children the tablets knowing very well that these children who were supposed to be carrying those tablets are not using those tablets at school. They are not carrying their tablets around you see, they leave them at home, and use them at appropriate time so our children and they misuse them most the time, like for example, on the other hand what I would say to that they must stop them because of the limited resources* (Economics teacher, FG3TS3).

> *The department is not doing justice especially to black schools. They come up with noble ideas that we can… To all the schools that I have been to, Gauteng online has always been offline. It has never worked. Tablets are not going to bring results. They are just confusing our learners even further. Now the learners are playing with the tablets because there is nothing inside. If they had something to learn then they were going to learn, now nothing, that's why they are failing* (Life Sciences teacher, FG5US2).

It seems as if technology is destroying the learners. Instead of helping them to improve the results, the learners end up playing games on the tablets.

**vii) What more can be done to improve Grade 12 learner performance?**

On this question, participants identified textbooks and opening of FET colleges as part of improving Grade 12 results.

a) Textbooks

The teachers indicated that the new textbooks do not have enough information in them unlike the ones that they used in the past. This is what they had to say:

> *If the curriculum changes you find that those books that were used before have more information than the new ones. New teachers do not have the knowledge that we have and now that the CAPS books do not have enough information it's a big problem* (English teacher, FG2TS2).

> *CAPS textbooks are empty, If I can talk about NS, the textbook does not have Natural Science inside. You will find that they teach a child to make a yoghurt, that is not science. It's part of home economics. Imagine in science teaching a learner how to make this* (NS teacher, FG5US2).

Textbooks are important resources to ensure effective teaching and learning and they should be informative.

b) FET colleges for learners

Teachers mentioned that the fact that there were learners with different abilities in the class should be taken into consideration. They suggested that those learners who could not make it in the normal stream schools needed to be channelled right from Grade 8 to FET colleges. They believed that FET colleges would address the issue of skills shortages in South Africa. They also indicated that children from foreign countries were more skilled than South Africans. Their comments were as follows:

> *The government must bring back the colleges, FET colleges it will be better. The very same learners who are progressed, some of them are hands-on but now education doesn't allow that, academically they are battling, they are struggling* (Business Studies teacher, FG2TS2).

> *Let me go back to what, FET, the streams are very much important. We are not gifted the same way. These learners cannot all of them do Mathematics. We used to have*

*needlework, they destroyed the needlework. Introduce FET colleges* (NS teacher, FG5US2).

If learners were channeled according to their capabilities, learner performance would improve and progression would eventually no longer be necessary.

**viii) Is there anything else you would like to mention about the curriculum in South Africa and Grade 12 learners' performance?**

Teachers indicated their concerns around curriculum change and subjects offered at school level.

a) Curriculum Changes

Teachers indicated that the CAPS is a good curriculum but the problem was its implementation. They indicated that the government should stop burdening South Africa with other countries' curricula. They recommended that the curriculum must be designed to suit the South African context and that education should not be politicised by changing the curriculum with every new Minister of Education. The teachers remarked that:

> T*he other thing that the ruling party must stop deploying comrades who are not teachers to be MEC of Education, or Minister of Education, they know nothing. Let them deploy those who knows. This can be better because such a person has been in the field before so he or she will be knowing the field. Those who have been teachers before, not comradeship please* (Social Science teacher, FG2TS2).

> *I think we should stop copying other country's curriculum, burdening our country or our kids with things that are not suitable for the conditions that we are in overcrowded classes, under-resourced schools* (Afrikaans teacher, FG4US1).

Curriculum change is good but conditions should be favourable for changes that needs to be implemented.

b) Subject Streams

Participants commented that there was a need to review the number of subjects offered at the school level and also to check if they were benefiting learners when they went on to tertiary education. They suggested that Mathematical Literacy and LO do not add any value for these learners because they are not even considered for entrance to university. However, some participants believed that LO was a key subject because it included career orientation

and guidance. Others believed that Mathematical Literacy was important for those who cannot do Mathematics because everyone is not gifted the same way. This is what they had to say:

> *In the case of Maths Literacy, why are they asking learners to do Maths Literacy while in varsity they are not going to use it. It's not valued so why are they doing Maths Literacy but when they go to university it is not even calculated as part of examinations* (Mathematics teacher, FG1TS1).

> *Actually, you must write it down that they must do away with this LO and employ full-time guidance counsellors in schools because if you look at the curriculum, the content that they are doing for LO, it's something that we do on a daily basis as my colleague has said. LO is just an extra subject that has been put there, I don't know by who and for what. It does not serve the purpose. It serves no purpose especially in Grade 12* (Economics teacher, FG5US2).

Although the participants commented that LO and Mathematical Literacy should be removed from the curriculum, I think the major concern is that learners do not all have the same abilities. I would recommend that LO should only be done up to Grade 7.

c) Integration

Teachers were concerned about the integration of subjects. They indicated that the teachers experienced difficulty with integration as they only specialised in a specific subject. Their comments were as follows:

> *The way they have integrated the subjects I don't think is it proper like in Natural Science, they have integrated Physical Science and Biology and they also put Geography part, so I have specialised in Physical Science, I don't know Geography at all, I'm just blank, so how am I going to teach these learners. So, the way they have integrated it is a problem* (Physical Science teacher, FG3TS3).

> *Same thing applies to Geography and History. We are teaching Geography and History. I have never done History, I don't know History but then in Social Sciences I have to teach learners history* (Social Sciences Teacher, FG5US2).

If teachers are not skilled in certain subjects, effective teaching and learning will not take place. The next section presents the themes and categories.

### 5.3.3 Themes and Categories

Data generated from both interview sets were analysed from taped scripts and notes taken. The researcher identified with McMillan and Schumacher's (2010:369) steps of data preparation:

- **Collect data**: I collected the data according to the interview guide.
- **Organise data**: I organised the data according to themes. Data from individual interviews with the HODs and the focus group interviews with the teachers were sorted according to the themes.
- **Transcribe data segments**: I wrote field notes of all the interviews and summarised them at the end. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed later.
- **Code data**: I identified ideas that stood out, analysed them to derive codes, and compared them in order to avoid duplication.
- **Categorise data**: Similar codes were put together. Major ideas were organised into categories.
- **Develop patterns**: I identified the relationships between categories by discovering patterns in the data.
- **Write up findings**: I presented the data in appropriate figures, diagrams, graphs, tables, and commented on the data.

Five major themes emerged from the empirical data. Themes and categories are outlined in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Themes and Categories

| Themes | Categories | Codes |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Time frame | Syllabus completion<br>Content congestion<br>Paperwork<br>Intervention program | Annual Teaching Plan |
| 2. Calibre of Learners | Lack of commitment<br>Homework not done | Medium of instruction |
| 3. Progression | Poor foundation<br>Overcrowding<br>Discipline problems | Modulation |
| 4. Promotion Requirements | Low standards<br>Mark adjustment<br>University dropout<br>Lack of parental involvement | Assessment |
| 5. Curriculum Change | Unqualified teachers<br>Unqualified facilitators<br>Lack of resources<br>Technology<br>Textbooks<br>Subject streams<br>Subject integration | Teacher involvement |

To arrive at themes and categories, I read many pages of the text. I divided the text into segments of information. I made notes, became immersed in the data to identify patterns and generated themes. During the analysis, new codes emerged from the data. I labelled the segments of information with codes (between 30-40 codes). I reduced the overlap and redundancy of codes to 20. I then reduced the codes to five themes. The next section provides the data interpretation of the study.

## 5.4 DATA INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is a process by which the researcher draws conclusions on the data that have been collected and analysed and compares these with conclusions advanced by others (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010:242). I discussed the themes, interwove literature into these themes and evidence derived from the data during interviews. Each of the themes in Table 5.3 represents a possible way to approach the questions that were posed to participants during the interviews. These themes are not intended to be seen as mutually exclusive or definitive but instead complement or overlap one another. The transcriptions of the semi-

structured interviews were grouped under the headings of the themes in Table 5.3 and discussion of the findings provided in the following sections.

### 5.4.1 Theme 1: Time frame

Time allocated for the curriculum is not fair to teachers and learners. Teachers are now focused on rushing through the curriculum to complete it. Even if the learners do not understand whatever is being taught, it does not matter as long as the syllabus is completed. Learners need to complete the activities that need more time in a short space of time. There is very little time for the teachers to engage with learners and to elaborate on the topics they are discussing. There is too much content to be covered in a short space of time. The syllabus is too long and teachers often end up lecturing and not teaching. They are forced to summarise topics because they have to rush to complete the syllabus. These findings are in accordance with UMALUSI (2014:60), Seale (2014:4), Goetze (2016:2) and Sundai and Sheriff (2015:1052) that the curriculum is overloaded (Chapter 2, subsection 2.9.4).

Time allocated does not cater for learners with different learning capabilities. Slow learners need more time and individual attention, and the curriculum does not cater for that. The curriculum operates on the assumption that all learners are good performers. The curriculum is not flexible and uses a one-size-fits-all approach. The findings concur with Ramla (2016:70), Seale (2012:4), Du Plessis and Marais (2015:8) and Epri (2016:97) (Chapter 2, section 2.2 iv) who found that teachers were often forced to neglect slow learners in order to ensure that they adhered to the time allocated to subjects.

I noted that teachers are given a time frame according to the ATP as to when they should finish certain content irrespective of whether the learners understood it or not. Every month, the HOD records how far teachers are with the completion of the syllabus for that particular section. If teachers are not on par with the ATP, they are supposed to devise a catch-up plan. Teachers concentrate on the ATP and may leave the learners behind because they have to finish the syllabus. Teachers are now worried about completing the syllabus more than making sure that they improve the performance of the learners. The dates in the ATP even factor in the examination so teachers work under pressure in order to cover the syllabus. They organise morning classes, afternoon classes and even weekend classes to make sure that they complete the syllabus. Tyler’s theory indicates that teachers must devote more time to the setting and formulation of objectives. However, the time allocated is a challenge for the teachers and the learners.

Each of the participants in the study repeatedly expressed their concern that due to time constraints, the teachers are burdened to come up with intervention programs. Teachers are expected to implement intervention programs but they are not trained to do so. They have to come up with their own programmes, own activities, teach, mark, keep registers, keep proof of the work done and create a file which leads to too much paperwork. From my experience, teachers spend a lot of time on learners who need interventions. I also noted that the intervention programmes are congested. Grade 12 learners attend extra classes from 14:00 to 16:00 or 17:00 on weekdays. Some schools have morning classes from 7:00 to 8:00 and even on Sundays and Saturdays. On Saturdays, learners attend the SSIP programme organised by the government for underperforming schools. During school holidays, SSIP organises camps for them from early morning to late afternoon. From the findings, I noted that time is a major contributor to poor performance. From my experience, even though there are qualified teachers in well-resourced schools, if insufficient time is allocated for completing the syllabus, learner performance will still be poor. Critical theory encourages teachers to be involved in curriculum development because they would be able to determine whether the time allocated would be sufficient.

### 5.4.2 Theme 2: Calibre of Learners

Learners seems to be struggling with English. Township schools are doing English as a Second Language and urban schools are doing English as a First Additional Language but when the examinations are set, that is not taken into consideration. All other subjects are set in English and if learners do not understand the language, it becomes a problem for them to interpret and understand the questions, leading to poor performance. This is in accordance with Howie (2013:1) who states that proficiency in English affects learner performance and Nyandwi (2014:27) who maintains that, if learners can grasp English at an early age, it increases their academic performance (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 i).

It became clear from this study that learners cannot read or write compared to learners from the olden days who were subjected to Bantu Education, for example. The foundation was better back then because they were taught at an early age how to read and write. From my experience when teaching Grade 12 learners, they are taught as if they are Grade 8 learners. Learners cannot understand a scenario question unless the teacher reads it for them and explains it sentence by sentence. They cannot construct a simple sentence.

Participants were concerned that learners are not committed to their school work. They have a negative attitude towards their school work. They do not do their homework. If teachers give them homework, they rewrite it for them as corrections because there would be nothing written in their books. In fact, the teachers are writing the homework. It seems that learners do not study because they do not know how to study maybe because of the progression principle. They do not take education seriously because they knew that they would be progressed anyway. I concur with the DBE (2011:100) that learners must commit themselves to doing their school work during classes, complete their homework and catch up on missed work due to absenteeism (Chapter 2, subsection 2.8.1).

Each of the participants in the study repeatedly expressed their concerns about the calibre of learners in Grade 12 who do not care about education, who cannot read, write or even express themselves in English due to progression. In my view, the language barrier could be the reason why some learners do not do their work and lack commitment.

### 5.4.3 Theme 3: Progression

Progression means that learners are pushed through the educational system without gaining any knowledge. There are learners in Grade 12 but their level of thinking is that of a Grade 8 learner due to progression. Progression was probably introduced for psychosocial reasons to avoid spending money on the same child in the same grade more than twice. Due to progression, learners do not have the required foundation for Grade 12. They have not acquired the requisite literacy skills and have not mastered reading, writing and listening skills. They have not acquired numeracy skills either, because they use a calculator for simple mental calculations. In the past, learners used to sing the times table and did not rely on a calculator. This study agrees with Spaull (2018:2) that 78% of the Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning in any language and 66% of Grade 6 learners cannot do basic Mathematics (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 v). The study's contribution to knowledge is to challenge the DBE to stop using progression to push learners through the system. The key point is that progression of learners leads to poor learner performance.

I noted that learners are neglected throughout the entire education system, but when they get to Grade 12, then only are questions asked. Focusing on Grade 12 is a waste of time because the damage has already been done at primary school level. A large number of HODs and teachers felt that if the foundation is weak, no matter how hard they tried, it would not help. Grade 12 is a progression from Grade 10 and progressed learners do not have the

foundation required to be in Grade 12. Learners need to know the previous grade's work and need to work hard in order to move from one grade to the next. When they get to Grade 12, they do not know how to study because they have not been studying or have not learnt basic study skills. They do not keep question papers for revision after writing a task, a test or an examination; they just leave them on the desks because they do not know the significance of revision. It is not fair to expect good results in Grade 12 from a progressed learner.

Progression makes the learners relax and do nothing in class knowing very well that they will move to the next grade without having to do anything. It also discourages other learners because at the end of the day everyone passes. Progression leads to overcrowded of classes. Some schools have 30 matriculants and some have more than 300 but the DBE expects School A and B to produce 100% pass rate. Progressed learners are slow learners and, if they are overcrowded, individual attention becomes a problem. This coincides with findings by Matshipi, Mulaudzi and Mashau (2016:1) that overcrowded classes lead to poor learner performance and that no effective teaching can take place (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 vii). From my experience, time allocated does not cater for progressed learners and even assessment follows a one-size-fits-all approach. Tyler provided curriculum developers with a clear step-by-step plan on how to develop a curriculum that would cater for all learners with different learning abilities, but these principles have not been applied in developing the CAPS curriculum.

From my experience, overcrowded classes lead to discipline problems. It was clear from the interview data that progressed learners do not study, do not do their homework and even refuse to do classwork activities because they know that eventually they will get to Grade 12 without any effort on their part. The data revealed that these learners are the ones who cause discipline problems because they do not have the necessary background knowledge to cope at the Grade 12 level; as a result, they become frustrated because they cannot assimilate what is happening in class. I noted that if classes are overcrowded, there is no effective teaching and learning and teachers spend more time disciplining the learners. This is in agreement with Marais (2016:2) who maintains that overcrowded classes are noisy and impact negatively on discipline (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 viii). The data revealed that teachers have nothing at their disposal as far as discipline is concerned. From my experience, learners can do as they please because they know that there are no

consequences for their actions. Learners have been given too many rights, but no responsibilities are emphasised.

Progression leads to poor Grade 12 results, and modulation has been introduced to improve the results by removing the high-risk learners from the system. In support of the above view, the UN (2013:67) adds that schools weed out poor-performing learners in order to increase the pass rate which, by default, contributes to a higher pass rate nationally. Modulation means that learners are given two years to write their Grade 12 examinations but there is no guarantee that those learners will pass their examinations in two years. I agree with the DBE (2015e:8) that progression from Grade 10-12 does not guarantee final certification, which is the National Senior Certificate (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 vi). The SADTU Limpopo Secretariat (2016:2) suggests that it is the DBE strategy to doctor the results at all costs (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 vi). In 2017, all the textbooks were collected from the learners irrespective of whether they were modulated or not, which left them with no resources for revision. I concur with Mola (2016:1) who maintains that learners are abandoned in Grade 12 (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 iv). However, Freire's theory and critical theory are concerned with democracy, equity and justice (Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.1 and 3.2.2) and the findings revealed that learners who are modulated are not given the choice of whether they want to do matric over two years. If they failed three subjects or more in the preliminary examination, they had no option. During the year, these learners attend school with others but when it comes to examinations, they are only allowed to write three subjects and have to write the other three subjects in June the following year. In 2018, progressed learners started to attend classes from February every Saturday and Sunday for three hours per day for major subjects which is not enough time to cover the whole content. In my view, progression must be stopped because it allows learners to move from one grade to the next without acquiring the subject content foundation required to be in that grade. My argument is that more FET colleges should be opened so that learners who cannot cope in the mainstream could be channeled accordingly from Grade 10.

### 5.4.4 Theme 4: Promotion Requirements

The participants stated that learners should not be allowed to pass with 30% because when they go to university they need 50% and above. This meant that learners could only enter a higher certificate programme because if they had less than 50%, they could not enter a bachelor's degree programme. This is an indication that the system is not producing career-orientated skilled learners. Learners have to register for bridging courses before they can

qualify to register for the course they want which is waste of money and is time-consuming. I concur with the UN (2013:61) and Bharuthram (2012:1) that the system is ineffective and inefficient because many learners are struggling in FET phase and university (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 v).

From the research findings, I noted that marks are added for the learners to pass at the end of the year. Learners are aware of this, and thus see no need to study or do their homework because, eventually, they will be progressed to the next grade. Learners could pass at secondary level but when they get to tertiary level, they do not meet the requirements, and consequently drop out. I agree with Spaull that the process of standardisation of Grade 12 results is a problem and universities are suffering because of mark adjustments (News24b, 2017:1, Chapter 2, section 2.7).

It became clear during this study that the CAPS causes confusion because in the lower grades, learners pass with 50% and as they get to Grade 8 and 9 they pass with 40%, then, when they get to FET phase, the pass mark decreases to 30%. The question is why younger children should be expected to perform at a higher level, when their thinking capacity is at a lower level but the pass percentage is lowered in FET when learners are more mature and should be thinking at a higher level. The data revealed that expecting learners to achieve only 30% to pass limits them and makes them lazy. Even those who could do better do not have the motivation to study. Standards are low and yet marks are added, condonation is applied and there is progression. This means that there are no genuine promotion requirements. I noted that Mathematics is a subject that opens doors for the learners but they are allowed to pass with 30% and have their marks condoned at 20%. Although participants recommended that the bar should be raised to 50%, I am concern that marks have already been added to get to 30%, so if the pass mark is 50%, it would mean more marks would have to be added which would defeat the purpose of raising the bar. However, to allow learners to meet admission requirements to university, the promotion requirements must be 50%. Participants believed that the number of subjects offered at high school level should be reduced. Consequently, the workload would decrease thereby allowing learners to focus on fewer subjects and improve their performance. Another contribution of this study could be to allow learners to choose subjects from Grade 8 and not from Grade 10. The advantage would be that learners would be exposed to their career stream earlier in their school life and be able to make a better decision about their careers when they got to Grade 10.

From the study, parents have interest in their children's education. They do not want anything to do with the school, and their jobs are more important than their children's education. They do not collect their reports and do not attend any parents' meetings. However, the DBE (2015b:11) states that parents must attend meetings requested by the school and regularly visit the school to enquire about their children's progress (Chapter 2, subsection 2.8.4 viii). The study concurs with Nkadi, (2015:119) who states that a major factor contributing to poor performance is lack of parental involvement (Chapter 2, subsection 2.9.4 viii). Lack of parental support contributes to high dropout rates. This is in accordance with Tucker (2017:1) who states that, if parents do not show any interest, the learner might not see any reason to follow through with their school work and may choose to drop out (Chapter 2, subsection 2.4.2). I noted that the children of parents who sign their children's books regularly make an effort to work in class and also do their homework which leads to better performance. Learners are given topics for SBA to research but the parents do not make an effort to help their children so that they can get better marks. Freire and critical theory encourages commitment from all stakeholders. In addition, Tyler recommends that all the stakeholders must be involved in identifying curriculum objectives.

It became clear during the study that the CAPS is overly assessment-based and not knowledge-based because there is an over-emphasis on assessment versus actual teaching. In February and March each year, the learners write an SBA. This forces the teachers to cover only the topics tested in the SBA in order to meet the requirements. Some HODs and teachers said that some SBAs were of a low standard, were full of mistakes and even the memoranda had errors. Learners passed the SBAs with very good marks because they were easier than the examinations. This study supports the findings of Baloyi (2008:1) who stated that the performance of learners in secondary schools could only improve if effective assessment strategies were implemented (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.2.4).

School-Based Assessments are classroom-based and learners pass very well so that, when they write the examinations, they have already accumulated marks which made it easier for them to pass. There was a concern from the participants that some of the SBAs were repetitive, the learners got to know what was in the SBA and passed very well, and teachers only taught what was in the SBA. The findings concur with Shermis and Di Vesta (2011:130) who suggested that tasks should change from year to year to avoid a tendency to restrict teaching to those tasks, thereby narrowing the content to be covered (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.2.2). Some participants were concerned that research projects did not benefit the

learners when they wrote examinations because they were not examinable, but learners earned more marks for them. Some learners copied from each other, and when the examination came, they performed very badly. Pregnant or suspended learners had the privilege of writing in the comfort of their homes, not under controlled conditions as per requirements from the DBE; since there were no backup SBAs; this made it easier for such learners to pass. Absent learners and suspended learners also had the opportunity to write the same SBA. I noted that it is easy for learners to pass SBAs, and the fact that learners may not get a zero mark takes away their responsibility and teachers have to account for these results.

For a period of 12 years, there is only one externally evaluated examination which is Grade 12. In support of the view above, Mola (2016:1) recommended that baseline assessment should be conducted in Grade 10 to assess whether the learners lacked the basic knowledge to start the FET phase (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 vi). I believe that there should be an externally evaluated examination at the end of every phase.

### 5.4.5 Theme 5: Curriculum Changes

Curriculum changing in South Africa seems to change with each Minister of Education. All Ministers are appointed by the political organisation in power. No sooner had teachers gained confidence in a specific curriculum, then a new one came into effect. The curriculum changed three times in a period of 20 years (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.4). I concur with the suggestion by UMALUSI (2014:8) that there is a need to slow down the pace of curriculum changes in order to allow the teachers, universities and national and provincial departments of education to work together towards a common understanding of what needs to be taught and learned (Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.3). Participants were concerned that older teachers left the teaching profession due to curriculum changes and new teachers were inadequately trained. Older teachers became frustrated with the technology that came with the new curriculum. This supports the finding by Omondi (2014:19) that if teachers supported and understood the curriculum change, it was more likely that the change would succeed (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.4).

Participants expressed their concern that curriculum change introduced subjects like Mathematical Literacy and Life Orientation which do not benefit learners when they go to university. Even if the learners obtained a distinction on the two subjects, they were not considered for university entrance. The participants recommended that the number of

school subjects offered should be reduced. Integration of subjects in Grade 8 and 9 is another challenge. For example, Geography is integrated with History, EMS is a combination of Accounting, Economics and Business Studies. The problem is that some teachers did not specialise in either of the subjects so the learners suffer because the teacher is not skilled in certain concepts and this will also affect their subject choices when they go to Grade 10.

There was a concern from the participants that the training normally took two to three days maximum, which was not enough to prepare them to be able to teach the learners. Critical theory encourages teacher professional development to help them to make necessary development (Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.2). There were certain concepts that teachers were not familiar with; as a result, they rushed through them and blamed it on the time allocated. I concur with Moodley (2013:91) and Mbatha (2016:26) who noted that teachers were inadequately trained and the CAPS workshop helped the teachers to understand the policy but did not prepare them for the challenges they would experience in the classroom (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.4.1). In my view, if teachers are not trained properly, learner performance will be affected.

Facilitators are also not skilled enough because during the workshops they just read photocopied material without explanation. They are also unable to answer questions from the teachers. This is in accordance with Kamla (2016:76) who noted that subject advisors were unable to offer enough support to teachers because of a lack of knowledge on the subject matter. Maharajh, Nkosi and Mkhize (2014:383) also stated that facilitators were unclear about the CAPS as a new curriculum and it was difficult for them to assist the teachers (see Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.4.1).

Data revealed that, in English, listening comprehension is required, which needs learners to listen to a story on the radio or watch movies. However, some schools do not have television sets or radios. Libraries are also needed for learners to do research. It became clear during the study that for subjects like Physical Sciences and Life Sciences, practicals were an important component meaning that functional laboratories should be a priority. Tyler's theory indicates that learning involves demonstration; therefore, the DBE should ensure that all the schools have adequate resources. Computers and data projectors are needed to enhance teaching and learning. Smartboards have been installed in schools, especially township schools to work hand in hand with the tablets, but maintenance of smart boards is a problem. WIFI was supposed to be available to complement the use of tablets and smart boards but

it is not. Gauteng-online was introduced in 2008 but it has been offline ever since. I agree with Reche, Bundi, Riungu and Mbugua (2012:129), Dhurumaj (2013:21), Epri (2016:98), Murava (2017:1), Nyandwi (2014:31), Rammala (2009:23) and Department of International Development (2011:1) that a lack of resources affects teacher's effectiveness in presenting lessons, and learning becomes difficult for the learners (Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2 iii). From the study, it also emerged that the CAPS looks good on paper and it is well-structured, but its implementation is a problem because many schools in South Africa are under-resourced. I concur with Nyandwi (2014:31) that the inequitable distribution of resources must first be addressed because schools which are well-resourced generally maintain high academic performance. I noted that for effective teaching and learning to take place, resources are a priority.

The CAPS came with technology which has had a major impact on learners' behaviour. Learners are allowed to bring their phones to school for research purposes but they spend more time on social media pretending to be doing research. In moving from classroom to classroom, they chat on their phones, which makes them lose focus. They are also tempted to cheat during tests. From my experience, learners do not read books anymore because they spend most of their time using their phones. They tend to use SMS slang in their communications. They do not want to write anymore; when the teacher tells them to write notes, they take out their cell phones and take pictures. Moreover, they use their phones to copy during examinations, especially when writing language tests as they use their phones for Google translation.

The government gave tablets to learners especially in township schools and underperforming schools in Gauteng with the aim of improving the results but learners are abusing them. It became clear during this study that they play games during classes and delete educational work and download movies onto their tablets. The learners constantly have their earphones plugged into the tablet for listening to music. This finding contradicts the DBE's (2011b:5) statement that the curriculum aims to produce learners that are able to use technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others (Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.2). I noted that learners are abusing the use of technology.

It became clear from this study that new textbooks do not have enough information compared to the ones that were used for previous curricula; therefore, more reference books must be made available to teachers. The participants recommended that the DBE should

choose one prescribed textbook to be used by all the schools as in the past. This study is in accordance with Ward (2015:8) who stated that improvement means that learning materials need to be improved (Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.2). UMALUSI (2014:17) added that, even if the curriculum was of a high standard, if there were no good textbooks to support it, poor learner performance would remain a problem (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.3.5).

All participants expressed their concern that they were not involved in the design of a new curriculum. They were simply given a policy and were expected by the DBE to implement it. This could be regarded as oppressive conduct, which contradicts Freire's theory (Chapter 3 subsection 3.2.1). It is imperative that all the stakeholders, namely, teachers, parents, SGBs and relevant authorities must be included in drawing up the new policies and in designing the curriculum. I concur with Adu and Ngibe (2014:988) who stated that the South African government should actively involve teachers in formulating any policy that affects the delivery of the curriculum (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.3.3). The USA Department of Education (2011:1) added that teachers must become real participants and partners in reform if learner performance is to improve (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.3.3). Politicians should not be involved in curriculum change and design. Teachers are the ones on the forefront and they should be involved in decision-making and the design of the curriculum using the theoretical framework which highlights five core activities in curriculum development as a point of departure (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.3).

## 5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study highlighted the perceptions of HODs and teachers in relation to challenges experienced when implementing the CAPS. Throughout the study, curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance have been recognised, supporting the assertion that time allocated to complete the syllabus remains significant in improving Grade 12 learner performance.

With regard to the concept of time, I maintain that the focus must be on making sure that the learners understand what has been taught rather than on completion of the syllabus. In my view, it does not help to finish the syllabus when the learners know little or nothing at the end of the day.

I was quite uncertain at the start of the study because the research was unpredictable. However, it was a positive experience because I learned many things that I did not know. I

learned that curriculum factors are interdependent. For example, time allocated leads to learners not having the subject content knowledge required but they are progressed, nonetheless. Progression leads to learners having a lack of foundational knowledge which creates inadequately prepared learners for the next grade, and time allocated does not cater for teachers to assist them to catch up. Progression leads to overcrowded classes and overcrowded classes leads to discipline problems. Progression also leads to poor learner performance with attempts by the DBE to manipulate the results by initiatives such as modulation to allow learners who did not succeed in the Grade 12 examinations to then rewrite over a period of two years.

This chapter and supporting appendices support the judgements that have been made during this study in an effort to ensure trustworthiness. The last chapter of this study provides the conclusions and recommendations.

## 5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an understanding of how the findings unfolded from the empirical data that were collected. The chapter illustrated how the data obtained from the research instruments (viz. semi-structured, in-depth, individual, open-ended interviews with the HODs and focus group interviews with the teachers) were used.

The responses received from the participants indicated that time allocated to complete the syllabus was insufficient and teachers had to leave the learners behind in order to adhere to the requirements in the ATP. If learners are not taught thoroughly because the teachers have to rush to complete the syllabus, this will result in poor learner performance.

Progression was identified as the second contributor to poor learner performance because learners have no subject content knowledge required to pass Grade 12. Even if they passed Grade 12, they were allowed to achieve 30%. The current inadequate promotion requirements cause learners to avoid working hard as they assume that it is easy to achieve 30%. The 30% pass does not take them anywhere so the system is producing learners who are unskilled because they do not qualify to go on to tertiary education programmes.

# CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in Chapter 1, Section 1.6, the initial research aim of this study was to investigate the key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance. Chapters 2 and 3 provided the literature review on curriculum factors contributing to poor learner performance and core curricular activities in curriculum development while Chapter 4 outlined the research design and methods. In Chapter 5, data analysis and interpretation of the research data were provided.

This last chapter of the study provides the summary, research conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore, this chapter provides avenues for further research, limitations of the study and concluding remarks.

In the next section, a summary of the main findings is presented.

## 6.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to Jurs and Wiersma (2008:82), the goal of research is to collect information that will answer a postulated research problem. In this regard, this study met the research objective as outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.6. The synthesis of the findings was done as per research questions that guided this study. All the research questions were answered. Subsequently, I discussed the key scholarly and empirical review findings.

### 6.2.1 Scholarly Review Findings

From Chapter 2, a contextual framework on factors contributing to poor learner performance was presented. Within this study, it is evident that these factors are interrelated to each other. I found that South African learners do not have the required subject content foundation in the lower grades because of learner progression which affects Grade 12 learner performance. Learners are progressed from grade to grade irrespective of whether they have acquired the required subject content knowledge or not. Table 2.1 (Chapter 2, subsection 2.3.1) indicates that the Grade 12 pass rate between 2012 to 2017 ranged between 70% to 78%. However, this table represents the quantity not the quality of the pass rates. The promotion requirements are very low because learners are allowed to pass with

30% on some subjects. It has been indicated that approximately 23% of Grade 12s would not have passed had they been required to score 50% for each subject (News24, 2014:1).

The pass rate is calculated using the number of people who wrote, not the number of people who registered or the Grade 1 or 2 enrolments 12 years earlier. This was indicated in Chapter 2, subsection 2.3.1. It has been stated that any pass percentage calculated from the number of learners who wrote would therefore be inaccurate, misleading and inflated (Business Tech, 2017:2; Equal Education, 2015:5; Lovemore, 2015:1; News24, 2014:1; Spaull, 2018:2; Vermeulen, 2015:1). Furthermore, learners disappeared from the system between Grade 10 and Grade 12. Learners were progressed from grade to grade and they got to Grade 12 without the required foundational skills or knowledge. In Grade 12, modulation has been introduced as a strategy to weed out failing students to protect the pass rate (Chapter 2, subsection 2.3.2 vi). It has been indicated that this increases the pass rate of schools and, by manipulating the statistics, contributes to a higher pass rate nationally (UN, 2013:67).

In subsection 2.3.2, I discovered that medium of instruction, lack of qualified teachers, lack of resources, time allocated to complete the syllabus, overcrowded classes, discipline and lack of parental support also lead to poor learner performance. In conducting this study, she realised that time allocated to complete the syllabus is a significant factor because all other factors are dependent on it. The time factor and the syllabus completion were discussed in Chapter 2, subsection 2.3.2. If learners are not thoroughly taught because teachers have to rush in order to complete the syllabus, learner performance cannot improve. In line with this view, the DoE (2001:19) indicates that barriers to learning are associated with the pace of teaching (Chapter 2, subsection 2.3.2 iv).

I also found that only few learners are able to go to university after completing Grade 12. Learners need to register for a bridging course before they can be admitted to the university which is waste of time and money (Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.3). It has been highlighted that serious interventions are needed in order to improve the number of Grade 12 learners achieving university entrance requirements. According to Table 3.1, approximately 30% of Grade 12 learners are able to go to university. This is contradictory to one of the aims of the CAPS which is to provide learners with access to higher education (UN, 2013:61).

In Chapter 3, the conceptual framework was provided. In subsection 3.3.2, five curriculum factors were discussed as a starting point for developing an effective school curriculum in order to improve learner performance. One of these essential factors is assessment. O'Neill's (2014:74) model of assessment was provided for curriculum designers and teachers to use as a starting point when designing an assessment. From this study, it became clear that there is not enough time allocated for teaching, that the CAPSS is overly assessment-based in terms of formative assessment, but there is only one external assessment in a 12-year period of schooling. Each province, district, school, teacher, learner and parent must clearly identify goals and objectives and work together in order to achieve them. In order to achieve those goals, there should be a focus on the content, teaching and learning methods, learning environment and assessment (Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.3). Curriculum developers can then set goals, plan experiences, select content and assess outcomes of school programmes through analysis, design, implementation and evaluation (Wiles & Bondi, 2011:5; Tyler, 2013:61).

I realised that curriculum change affects teachers, parents and resources. (Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.4). It has been noted that favourable conditions are lacking for the implementation of CAPS; for example, teachers and facilitators who have not been trained on the new content areas, inadequate teacher training and resources (Mbatha, 2016:1; Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2014:380; Moodley, 2013:91). If curriculum change is to be successful, it should be acknowledged that teachers are the key drivers of curriculum and their involvement will ensure effective implementation. In line with this view, if teachers are not part of curriculum development and are unskilled, it has negative impact on the learner performance (Seale, 2012:4; Tshiredo, 2013:1; Murava, 2017:3).

Chapter 3 presented the theoretical framework of this study, namely Freire's theory, critical theory and Tyler's theory. Additionally, section 3.2 emphasises how these curriculum theories can effectively guide curriculum design and implementation. Freire's theory is against the oppression of people and encourages dialogue where teachers and learners become jointly responsible for decision-making. He is against the banking model where education becomes the act of depositing knowledge in which the teacher is the depositor and the learner receives, memorises, repeats and stores the knowledge (Freire, 1972:21). Freire's theory is linked with critical theory because they both attempt to reconstruct education on the basis of equality for all. Critical theorists are concerned with equity and justice in relation to issues such as race, socio-economic status, religion and sexuality

(Reeves, Mathieu, Kuper & Hodges, 2008:633). In this vein, critical theory encourages teachers to be involved in curriculum design and implementation because they then have the power to influence decisions that impact their lives. Learner-centred approaches (PBL and SDL) were identified as the most effective strategies to overcome the banking model. It was noted in Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.2.3, that learner-centred approaches focus on quality for all learners and are consistent with international approaches (DBE, 2009:20). Learner-centred approaches are complemented by direct instruction which is structured around content and drilling and provides constant interaction between the teacher and the learner (Lindsay, 2012:1). In Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.3, Tyler's theory was also presented. It states that in developing any curriculum plan that will bring about significant improvement in community life, the following questions must first be answered: what educational purpose should the school seek to attain; what educational experiences can be provided that are linked to attain these purposes; how can these educational experiences be effectively organised and how can we determine whether these purposes are being attained (Tyler, 2013:1)?

### 6.2.2 Empirical Research Findings

According to the empirical data collected from the participants within this study, five major themes affect learner performance, namely, time frame, calibre of learners, progression of learners, promotion requirements and curriculum change (Table 5.3).

The study revealed that the time allocated to complete the syllabus may impact effective teaching and learning and influence learner performance negatively (Chapter 5, subsection 5.4.1). Thorough teaching is not done because teachers are concerned about meeting the requirements as per the ATP. The time allocated to complete the syllabus is not enough across all grades because the CAPS is content-congested. It has been indicated that teachers are under pressure to meet the requirement of the ATP. However, it became clear that those teachers who are able to finish the syllabus rushed through it and left the learners behind. As a result, interventions are required which, in turn, increases the workload of the teachers and the paperwork because the programme has to be drafted, intervention activities have to be prepared and proof of the interventions is required.

It emerged from the study that the CAPS is producing learners who cannot read or write (Chapter 5, subsection 5.4.2). Most learners lack commitment and do not do their homework. This could be attributed to the fact that some of them do not understand English

which in turn affects their performance in other subjects. The issue of progression is central as it has disastrous repercussions for learners moving from one grade to another without the required basics. The study revealed that progression is a major contributor to poor Grade 12 learner performance. Progression results in a poor calibre of learners, who are lazy and do not care about their school work because they will eventually move from one grade to another, irrespective of whether they do the required work or achieve the required percentages or not.

The evidence from the data extracted from the HODs and the teachers confirmed that progression leads to overcrowded classes and discipline problems (Chapter 5, subsection 5.4.3). If classes are overcrowded, there is no time for individual attention and teachers spend more time on disciplining the learners than on actual teaching. To improve Grade 12 learner performance, the focus should be on the foundation phase. The data analysis has shown that the DBE's focus is on Grade 12 but the damage has already been done in the lower grades because these learners come to Grade 8 without the foundation needed for secondary school. Moreover, the time allocated does not cater for progressed learners or for learners with poor foundations because curriculum is not differentiated for a diversity of learners.

It became clear from this study that promotion requirements are very low and demotivating for the learners because they believe it is easy to achieve 30% (Chapter 5, subsection 5.4.4). The 30% pass does not allow them entry to university. This is an indication that assessment is not effective because there is only one external examination in a 12-year period of schooling. The study revealed that SBAs help learners to pass because they are easier than the examinations, repetitive and often research-based. Moreover, marks are added for the learners to be progressed from one grade to the next grade which discourages them from working hard. The CAPS learners cannot cope at the university and they often drop out during their first year of study.

From the study, it also emerged that curriculum changes affect teachers and facilitators who are given crash courses of two to three days which do not equip them thoroughly to implement the changes (Chapter 5, subsection 5.4.5). Subject integration was also identified as the reason for having unskilled teachers as most teachers are only qualified in a specific subject. It became clear that the new curriculum came with a variety of textbooks for teachers to choose from; however, the quality varies and teachers suggested that only one

textbook should be prescribed. From the findings, it was noted that the CAPS required the use of technology but such resources were not available for successful implementation of the curriculum. The study also found that the number of subjects offered at secondary school level is a concern because some of these subjects do not benefit learners when they go to tertiary institutions. Heads of Departments and teachers believed that if they could be involved in the design of the curriculum, learner performance would improve because they would design a manageable curriculum that would allow for proper progression from one grade to the next.

## 6.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The initial research question of the study was: What are the key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools? (Chapter 1, subsection 1.5.1). Research conclusions are stated as answers to the initial research questions and the sub-questions was answered first.

### 6.3.1 Sub-question 1: How can curriculum theory effectively guide curriculum implementers?

On the first sub-question of the research: How can curriculum theory effectively guide curriculum implementers, the data analysis indicates that HODs and teachers need to be involved in curriculum analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. It emerged from the study that the government has politicised education because it seems with every new president, there is a new Minister of Education. Teachers should be involved in the design of any new curriculum as they are the ones who have to implement the curriculum.

Teachers are the drivers of the curriculum and if they are not competent and confident about the new curriculum, the desired results will not be achieved which could affect learner performance. The curriculum in South Africa has changed four times in a period of 20 years since 1998. These changes could lead to teachers being frustrated and has led to some teachers leaving the profession. It is imperative to take into consideration the factors involved in curriculum transformation such as goals and objectives, content, teaching and learning methods, learning environment and assessment in order to ensure effective implementation. Curricula should provide learners with knowledge and skills required to lead successful lives. It should not be the same for everyone: it should cater for all types of

schools and all types of learners. It is important to address the equitable distribution of resources to rural and urban schools before any curriculum is introduced. It emerged from the study that not all learners are academically inclined and that was not taken into consideration when the CAPS was designed. It is imperative that FET colleges should be opened for learners who are unable to cope academically so that they can channelled accordingly.

### 6.3.2 Sub-question 2: What are the key generic curriculum challenges experienced in South Africa?

On the second sub-question of the research, this study confirms that overcrowding is a serious challenge in South Africa which leads to poor learner performance. Overcrowded classes leads to poor control of learners, poor interaction and too much distraction. Each learner is unique and has a right to the attention and support needed. Overcrowded classes hampers effective teaching and learning. It is difficult for the teacher to give individual attention so it has an impact on effective curriculum delivery and then affects learner performance. The findings from the data revealed that overcrowded classes are usually noisy which in turn leads to disciplinary problems. It is a finding of this study that teachers spend more time on disciplining the learners than on teaching. Learners know that they can get away with almost anything because there are no remedies at the teachers' disposal to discipline them. It is obvious that the government has given many rights to these learners but has demanded little in the way of responsibilities.

It emerged from the study that all HODs and teachers felt that parents are not supportive of their children. They do not attend any meetings called by the school and do not care about their children's progress because they do not even fetch the term reports. Parents are partners in education, and their involvement is significant. Education is supposed to be an interactive process which engages parents, teachers and learners and requires from the parents more involvement than simply receiving information by newsletters without any response. Ideally if they can be involved in checking the learner's books regularly and attending parents' meetings, learners' performance might improve. Parents simply send their children to school for the teachers to do what they are trained for and they play no role in the school or even in ensuring that homework is done. Participants indicated that parents neglect their role in education. The HODs and the teachers themselves understood and realised the importance of working together with the parents but how this could be done was

not clear. If parents were guided on how they can be involved, perhaps they would show a greater interest in their children's education.

### 6.3.3 Sub-question 3: What are the effects of curriculum change?

On the third sub-question of the research, this study confirmed that curriculum change might lead to unskilled teachers and facilitators. It emerged from this study that most facilitators do not know their subject content and are unable to assist the teachers in need. Workshops were conducted on each new curriculum but the time allocated for training was too short to equip the teachers and facilitators properly. Subject integration in Grade 7-9 also leads to problems with teachers who qualified in a specific subject only. It became clear from the study that teachers focus more on the topics that they excel in but when there was a section that they did not know well, they were reluctant to teach it. As a result, it affected learner subject choices when they got to FET. If teachers are not empowered, thorough teaching and learning will not take place.

The study revealed that the CAPS introduced subjects which did not benefit the learners when they went to university. Even if the learners obtained a distinction in those subjects, for example, Life Orientation and Mathematical Literacy, it was regarded as null and void. Learners are burdened with too many subjects which increases their workload and leads to poor performance. There are too many textbooks available for teachers to choose from but it is to an advantage of some schools over the other.

### 6.3.4 Sub-question 4: How do teachers perceive the CAPS in South Africa?

On the fourth sub-question of the research, this study confirmed that the CAPS has a good content base, it teaches learners to be independent, is skills-related and progresses in depth and difficulty from grade to grade. The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements sets a very high standard for progressed learners. It promotes active and critical learning and moves away from rote learning. However, there is no follow-up from the DBE at the classroom level. The DBE is more focused on the number of learners passing not on the quality of passes hence quantity seems to be a priority. In most cases, the CAPS does not prepare learners for university. Only few learners qualify to go to university, and some learners need to take the bridging course in order for them to qualify for the courses they want which is basically a waste of money and time.

### 6.3.5 Sub-question 5: What are teachers' experiences regarding the CAPS?

On the fifth sub-question of the research, this study found that the CAPS is overloaded in terms of content, assessment, paperwork and the workload for teachers and learners. The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements leads to a poor failure rate, therefore intervention programmes have been introduced. It emerged from the study that intervention programmes add to teachers' workload and the amount of paperwork because proof of the results of the intervention has to be provided. The Secondary Schools Improvement Programme was also introduced as an intervention which is conducted during school holidays and Saturdays which are also congested in terms of what needs to be covered. Moreover, in every school, learners attend intervention programmes every day and even on weekends, hence they do not have time to do their homework or to study because they are exhausted. Teachers have not been adequately trained to implement the CAPS and they also experience difficulty in implementing it because of lack of resources. Teachers were only involved at the implementation phase thus there was a lack of ownership of the curriculum.

### 6.3.6 Main research question: What are the key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance in selected South African secondary schools?

On the main question of the research, this study found that the key curriculum factors can be condensed into five themes, namely time frame, calibre of learners, progression of learners, promotion requirements and curriculum change. The identification of these themes is the novel contribution of this study. The themes could undoubtedly be of great value in directing strategic planning and proper management of the curriculum dispensation in South African education. From the study, it was clear that the time allocated to complete the syllabus is not enough and the CAPS is content-congested. Teachers rush through the curriculum in order to meet the ATP requirements, meaning that learners may be left behind without understanding what is required. It emerged from the study that there might not be effective teaching and learning because the focus is on syllabus completion.

This study confirms that the CAPS is not producing a high calibre of learners because most them cannot read or write and do not understand English. This could be a result of learners moving from one grade to the next without the required subject content foundation. It could also be that teachers are not making enough effort to help the learners and learners do not care because they know that they will be progressed anyway. It has been confirmed by many studies that South African Grade 3s and 4s cannot read with understanding and rank

the lowest in international tests. This is an indication that the problem starts in the foundation phase. This study also confirms what has been confirmed by many studies that if learners do not understand English, their content subjects will suffer. Most learners lack commitment towards their school work, they are lazy, they do not do their homework, and they miss classes without reason. This lack of high-performing learners is also a result of progression because learners are aware that they are not supposed to stay in a phase for longer than four years. It became clear from the study that psychologists are needed in schools because learners need to be assessed regularly.

Progression has been identified as a major contributor to poor learner performance because progressed learners have no subject content foundation. Grade 12 is a progression from Grade 10 but progressed learners do not have the subject content knowledge required. Learners move from grade to grade without studying and, when they get to Grade 12, they do not know how to study. The DBE realised that progressed learners might decrease the pass rate and they introduced modulation as a way of addressing this. It has been confirmed by other studies that modulation is not in the best interests of the learner but it is used to manipulate the results in order to have a better pass rate. It is the findings of this study that the School Assessment Teams add marks at the end of every year for learners to move from one grade to another. Progression of learners and adding of marks might be the reason why most learners are not coping when they get to tertiary level or why they cannot meet the university requirements. Learning barriers must be identified in primary school and dealt with accordingly instead of progressing learners without the required pass marks. In order to improve performance, learners should only move from one grade to another provided they meet the promotion requirements.

From the study, it became clear that promotion requirements are very low which make learners lazy because it is easy to achieve 30%. The 30% pass is an indication that the government is only interested in the quantity and not quality. Assessments are very easy compared to the tests and examinations and some of them are research-based. With research-based task learners get assistance from friends and family. Furthermore, the fact that learners are not supposed to get a zero mark for tasks takes away the responsibility from the learners and burdens the teachers. There is little time for teaching and learning, with an overemphasis on assessment meaning that learners are assessed without having enough subject content knowledge. Teachers are under pressure with the SBAs and they end up teaching toward the SBA.

This study found that South Africa copies curricula from developed countries whereas it is still a developing country and they do not localize that curricula. Instead of improving the Bantu Education curriculum and using the Independent Examination Board curriculum, they go abroad. When the new curriculum is introduced, it becomes uniform for everybody, and is applicable to both well-resourced and under-resourced schools. The CAPS requires the use of technology, but resources to ensure successful implementation are not available. For effective teaching and learning to take place, resources are a priority.

## 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the following paragraphs, I provided recommendations with regard to key generic factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance and strategies to improve learner performance. It should be noted that improving learner performance is a process and cannot happen overnight. Continuous improvement and transformation is required to address challenges experienced by HODs and teachers in the implementation of the CAPS. There is no once-off remedy that will bring about instant improvement in learner performance. The literature study in Chapters 2 and 3 as well as empirical data in Chapter 5 provided evidence of strategies which can be implemented to improve learner performance.

The recommendations are divided into the DBE (National), district and community levels. In some instances, motivation for the recommendation is provided.

### 6.4.1 DBE (National level)

Recommendations and suggestions emanating from the research findings and conclusions are forwarded for consideration of the DBE in successful implementation of the curriculum in order to improve learner performance. The summary of recommendations to the DBE is presented next in figure 6.1.

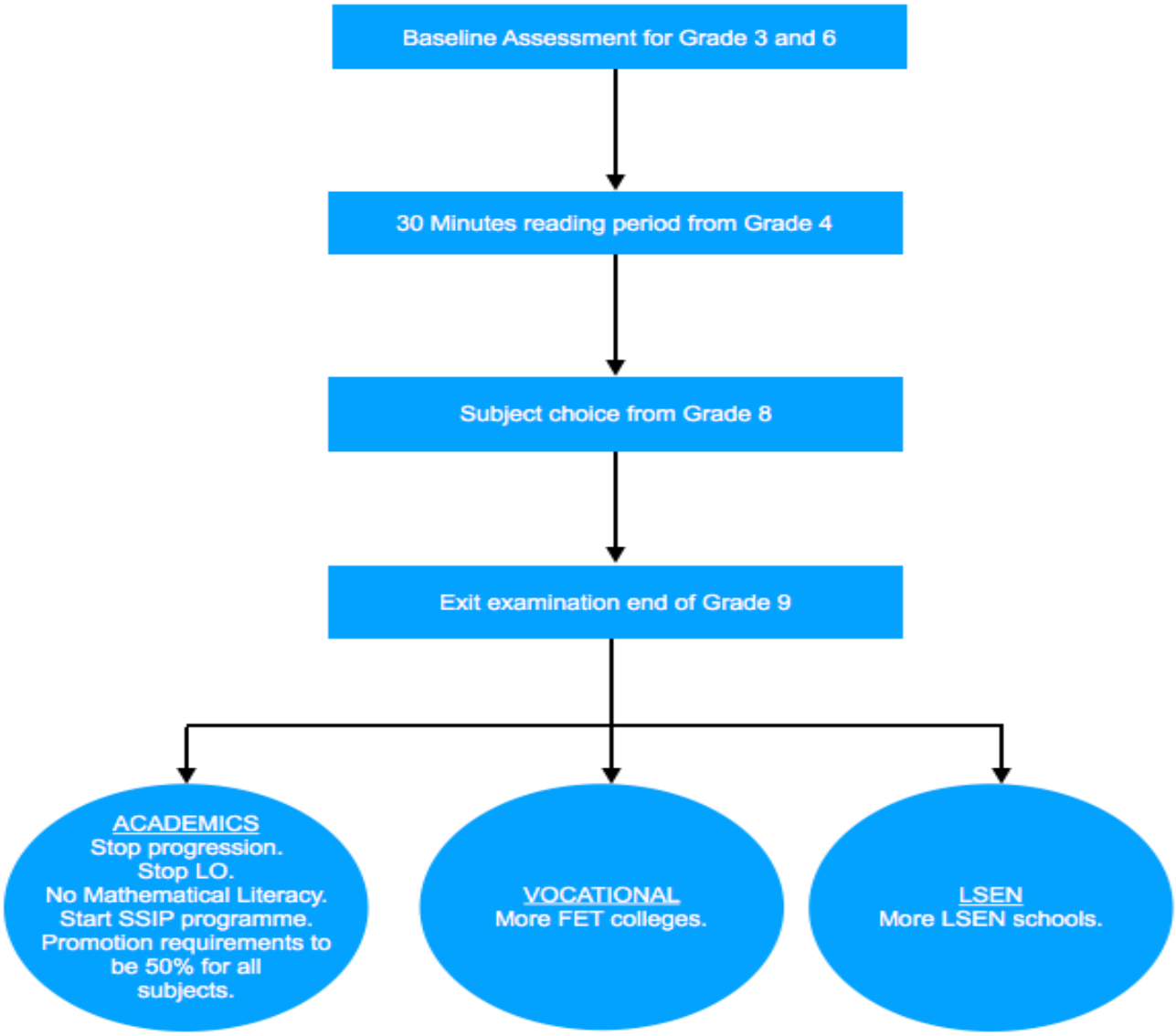


Figure 6.1: Recommendations to DBE

6.4.1.1 Recommendation 1

It is recommended that the DBE must revisit the assessment policy. Tests must replace the SBAs to monitor the academic progress of the learners. The DBE must choose schools randomly at the end of each year to set the tests and examinations for the four terms for each subject. Each school must set one subject for the term and should only be known by the DBE which school set which subject. This will serve as a monitoring system to track if teachers are still covering what is expected to be covered for the term. Tests will train the learners to get to the routine of studying. Striving to achieve greater consistency of assessment across and within all provinces could be one step in the right direction. Research project and assignments should be done informally in order to enhance their skills.

Assessment should be reduced to one task per subject which is a test in order to reduce the workload. There should be an exit examination at the end of every phase. Diagnostic testing should be done early and frequently and intensive interventions must be provided.

#### 6.4.1.2 Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the first 30 minutes of everyday should be an English reading period to enhance learners' reading skills. English is a language used in the examination to interpret all other subjects; therefore, proficiency in English could improve learner performance.

#### 6.4.1.3 Recommendation 3

Learners should start choosing subjects from Grade 8 not Grade 10. Learners are burdened with subjects that will not benefit them in future. As a result, they lose interest especially where the subjects are integrated. If learners are doing subjects that they are good at, progression and adding of marks should stop and the bar could be raised to 50%. The government should focus more on the quality of passes not the quantity.

#### 6.4.1.4 Recommendation 4

The number of subjects offered at school level should be reduced, especially the ones that does not benefit the learners at tertiary level. LO could be done until Grade 7 and the time for Life Orientation could be distributed to other subjects. Mathematical Literacy should also be stopped, because it is also not considered for university entrance, even if they get a distinction. The ATP and the time allocated for each topic should be revisited. Time allocated should be aligned to the content that needs to be covered. Even with qualified teachers and better resources, learner performance will still be a challenge if there is insufficient time allotted to completing the syllabus. Barriers to learning are associated with the pace of teaching.

#### 6.4.1.5 Recommendation 5

More FET colleges should be opened so that learners can be channeled accordingly from Grade 10 if they cannot cope in a mainstream school. If learners are channeled accordingly, learner performance could improve and progression and adjustment of marks could stop.

### 6.4.1.6 Recommendation 6

If teachers choose a textbook, it can be an advantage to some schools at the expense of others. Some schools are privileged to have examiners on their staff; therefore, they use a textbook that would be relevant to what would be examinable at the end of the year. The DBE should identify one prescribed textbook for each subject.

### 6.4.1.7 Recommendation 7

Recommendation on Curriculum Development is presented next in figure 6.2.

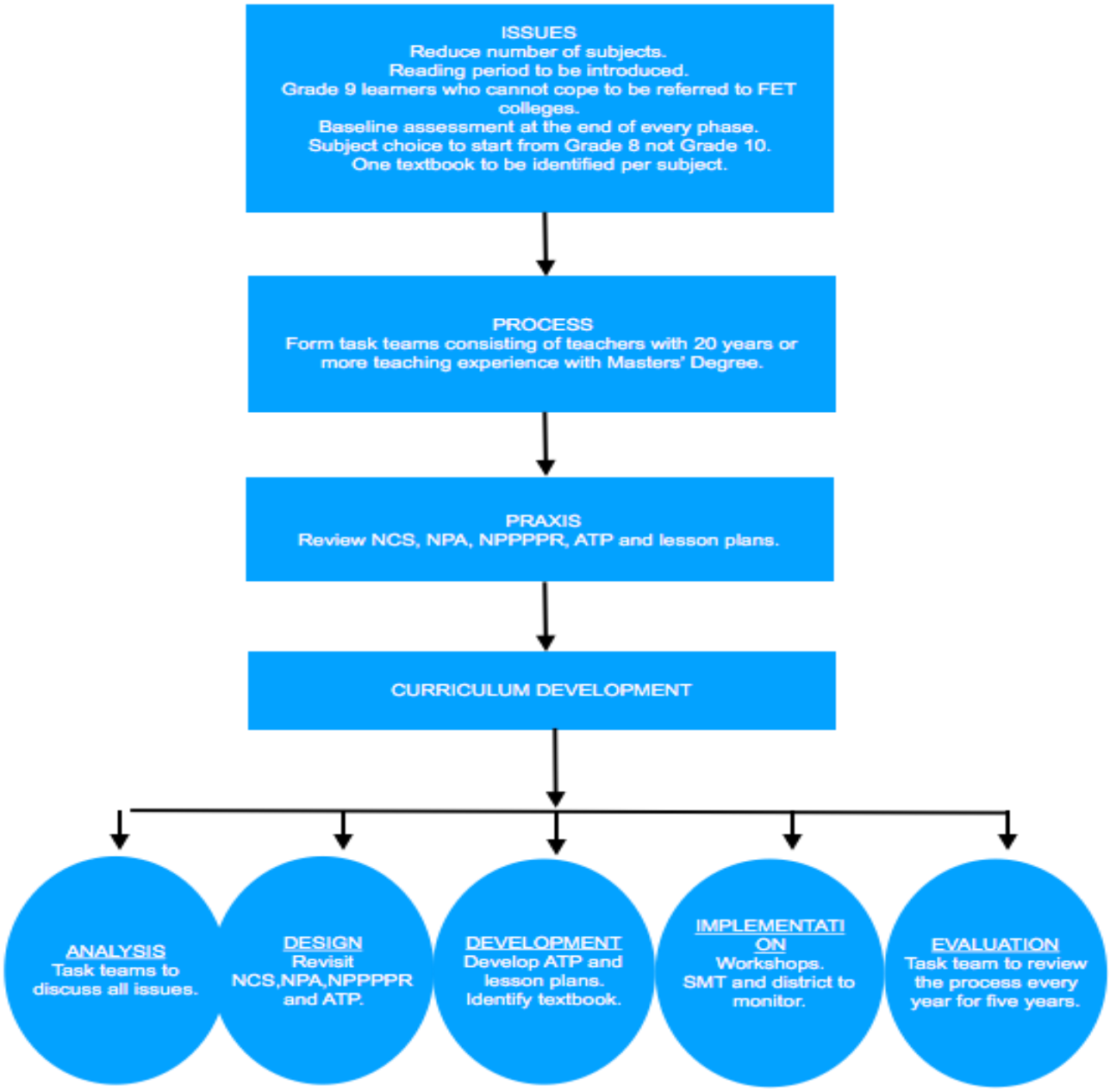


Figure 6.2: Recommendation on Curriculum Development

Figure 6.2 identified issues that needs to be considered in developing a new curriculum. It is recommended that each province select a task team consisting of only teachers who have more than 20 years of teaching experience and are still teaching to scrutinise all the curricula we have had and to select the best alternatives.

The task team should consist of majority of teachers with Masters' Degree. Involving as many experienced teachers as possible in the analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum is significant. The teachers are the best people to analyse the curriculum because they understand the current situation and they are able to scrutinise the content and decide on how to improve the situation. They should come up with tasks that will enhance effective teaching and learning.

They should establish specific activities and criteria related to the objectives of the curriculum. They should draft the ATP for each subject during the term and lesson plans using the transactional strategies, appropriate media, providing the learning resources, promoting classroom learning experiences and continuous testing. For a period of five years, they should meet at the end of every year and discuss whether the curriculum is working or not by identifying the strength and weaknesses that have become evident over the period.

Thorough evaluation of teachers, learners, materials, tests and examinations should be done to check whether they have been successful in designing a curriculum that has enabled learners to successfully learn what was intended. The SMTs of each school must carry on monitoring and guiding the curriculum implementation and ensure that the ATP, lesson plans and records of marks are prepared regularly.

#### 6.4.1.8 Recommendation 8

The DBE should open teacher training colleges as proper training is a necessity. Workshops should be done at those colleges by skilled facilitators. Crash courses do not prepare teachers sufficiently to be able to implement the curriculum successfully. Qualified teachers will lead to better performance and better performance will motivate learners to work hard.

#### 6.4.1.9 Recommendation 9

Grade 12 begins in Grade R therefore the DBE should focus more on foundation phase. Learners acquire learning deficiencies at primary school level and move to secondary school

without having these deficiencies addressed. Therefore, poor performance in lower grades leads to poor performance in secondary schools. Foundation phase teachers should be re-skilled and carefully selected. There should be an assessment for teachers before they can be employed.

To ensure that teachers are competent to teach, there should be an assessment every three years for each phase. Most teachers know a little about their subject matter. Teachers are the main resources in the learning process which means that learner performance depends on their skills. Teachers who achieve less than an 80% pass rate should have to attend workshops on the content.

#### 6.4.1.10 Recommendation 10

It is recommended that the DBE should slow down on curriculum change and should build from one curriculum to the next, taking the best elements of the earlier curriculum and building them into the new curriculum, rather than introducing an entirely new curriculum each time there is a change in the Minister of Education.

### 6.4.2 District level

The following recommendations would assist the districts, the school principals, the HODs and the teachers to come up with informed decisions when dealing with the issue of improving learner performance. Schematic recommendation to the district is presented next in figure 6.3

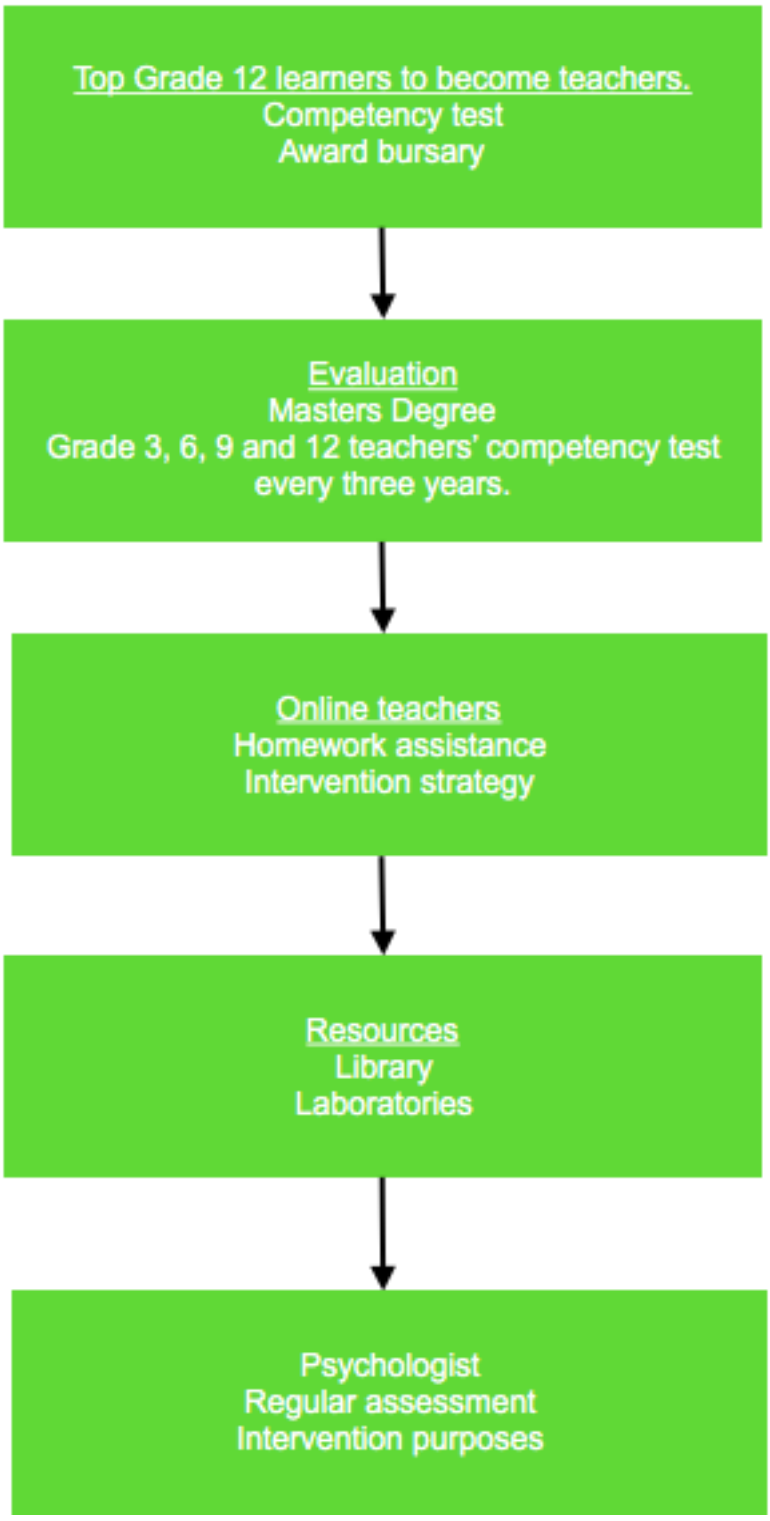


Figure 6.3: Recommendation to district

6.4.2.1 Recommendation 1

It is recommended that each district should:

- encourage the top performing learners to become teachers and make teaching a high-status profession;

- make teaching competitive by offering performance-based bonuses; and
- offer good salaries to teachers in order to retain them in the education system.

#### 6.4.2.2 Recommendation 2

Teachers should be evaluated by trained facilitators annually and they must get feedback on their evaluation. They should also get one afternoon per month of professional development.

#### 6.4.2.3 Recommendation 3

As a further intervention, I recommend that each district should employ two online teachers per district per challenging subject. The advantage would be to reduce learners' frustrations of not being able to do their homework due to lack of understanding. The study attempts to tie each learner to a responsibility in doing their homework thereby also looking at sustainable ways of improving learner performance. The realisation is that learners needs assistance as they execute their studies outside the classroom.

#### 6.4.2.4 Recommendation 4

Better resources should be provided for all the schools, especially the disadvantaged ones. Resources enhance teaching and learning so this should be a priority for each district. Each district should ensure that each school has a working library, science laboratory and computer laboratory. Availability of resources is critical for successful implementation of the curriculum.

#### 6.4.2.5 Recommendation 5

Secondary School Improvement Programme should start from Grade 10 not Grade 12. If the basics are instilled early in the phase, learners will not struggle in Grade 12.

#### 6.4.2.6 Recommendation 6

It is recommended that each district should employ full-time psychologists because the learners need to be assessed regularly. Learners face many challenges at school and at home, making interventions necessary to guide learners who experience barriers to learning.

### 6.4.3 Community level

The idea is that community members can be meaningfully engaged for effective teaching and learning to be realised.

#### 6.4.3.1 Recommendation 1

Learners should be regularly motivated. Educated members of each community, artists, police and entrepreneurs and other professionals should visit schools and motivate the learners once a month. If learners are motivated regularly, it will help them to make informed decisions about their career choices and to be more knowledgeable about options available for them.

#### 6.4.3.2 Recommendation 2

School Governing Bodies should educate the parents on how they should be involved in their children's education and about career choices available for their children. Most parents believe that the only way for their children to succeed is if they pass Grade 12 and go to university which is a misperception as there are many other viable options and not every student can go to the university.

#### 6.4.3.3 Recommendation 3

Communities should create a forum where parents can communicate directly with the teachers at any time of the day. Teachers can use this forum to report absenteeism, late coming, homework not done, disruptive behaviour and missing of classes on a daily basis. Homework can also be pasted on this forum for the parents to be able to monitor their children's books and also to be aware when the learners are writing tests. This forum can also be used to educate the parents about the dangers of drugs, how to recognise whether the child is taking drugs and how to tell if the child is being bullied.

## 6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, the study was limited to three township schools and three urban schools in Gauteng. Thus, the generalisability of the results is limited. Secondly a limitation pertains to the geographical area in which the investigation was conducted as the conditions in Ekurhuleni North may not be representative of other areas in South Africa. Thirdly, the research was not done specifically according to school categories of top, middle and lower performance.

Fourth, the research was not done according to schools managed by male or female principals.

Having strategies in place for improving learner performance will not yield better results instantly. Having implemented such strategies, a study is needed to evaluate its impact on effective teaching and learning.

## 6.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

As I started her journey with this study, with the research proposal as an initial entry point, I was not clear where it would take her. Throughout this study, I was conscious that it aimed at addressing a distinctive researchable problem which is Grade 12 learner performance.

The reason why I conducted this study is best captured by the following statement: “Researchers immerse themselves in a culture, investigate the particular circumstances present in that scene and only then move towards impressive statements and theories” (Tracy, 2013:23).

Part of the problem which I stated in Chapter 5 was that most HODs and teachers highlighted tremendous challenges in the effective implementation of the CAPS in terms of learner performance.

To remind the readers, the ultimate goal of this study was to identify key generic curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance and to devise strategies which could assist in improving learner performance. In turn, such strategies should enhance learner performance and could allow learners to pass Grade 12 successfully and meet university entrance requirements. One strategy which has been recommended is to involve as many experienced teachers as possible in the design of the curriculum analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. The importance of involving teachers in the curriculum is that they know the learners better than anyone else.

The study will broaden all stakeholder’s knowledge about curriculum factors affecting learner performance and enlightened them about how these curriculum factors are interdependent on each other.

Another implication of this study is a need to give learners and parents more opportunities to communicate clearly with their teachers and discuss academic issues. This will help them to better understand what is expected of them academically.

It became clear from this study that the ultimate goal of this study is to improve learner performance. In conclusion, improving learner's performance is a long process which needs constant monitoring from all the stakeholders.

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## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNISA university of south africa

**UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

2017/05/17

REC Ref#: 2017/05/17/37365371/24/MC
Name: Mrs MJ Letshwene
Student#: 37365371

Dear Mrs Letshwene,

**Decision: Ethics Approval from 2017/05/17 to 2022/05/17**

**Researcher:** Name: Mrs MJ Letshwene
Telephone#: 0833360981
E-mail address: jletshwene@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Name: Prof EC du Plessis
Telephone#: 0124294033
E-mail address: dplesec@unisa.ac.za

**Working title of research:**

**Curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance: A multiple case study of South African secondary schools**

**Qualification:** D Ed in Curriculum Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 5 years.

*The low risk application was reviewed by the College of Education Ethics Review Committee on 2017/05/17 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was approved on 2017/05/17.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

## APPENDIX B: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH HODs

### Welcome

Good afternoon. I want to thank you for taking your time to meet with me today. I appreciate your willingness to participate.

### Introduction

My name is Jacobine Letshwene, I am a teacher at Dawnview high school, currently enrolled with UNISA as a PhD student. I'm here to ask about your perceptions and experience about curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance.

### Purpose

The reason I am having this interview is to identify challenges that you face daily when implementing and monitoring curriculum. I want to know what you like with South African curriculum, what you don't like and how can it be improved. I will be writing brief notes during our interview.

### Ground rules

You are invited because you are curriculum implementer and monitor. There are no wrong answers but rather different points of view. What is said in this room stays here. I will appreciate if you put your phone on silence so that we are not interrupted.

You've probably notice the microphone. I am tape recording the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very useful things in these interviews and I can't write fast enough to get them all down. You are assured of complete confidentiality. The report will go back to Department of Basic Education to help them plan for future programs. Are there any questions?

Well, let's begin. If you are, therefore, if you agree to participate in this interview, kindly read and sign the consent form.

**Interview questions**

**Engagement question**

i) How do you perceive and experience the CAPS curriculum in South Africa?

ii) What curriculum factors do you think contribute to poor Grade 12 learner performance regarding the learners, time allocation for syllabus completion, availability of resources and school environment? Please elaborate on each factor?

**Exploration questions**

iii) Think back over all the years that you have been teaching and tell me your challenges as a teacher.

iv) Think back over the past years of how our curriculum has changed from Bantu syllabi, to C2005 to NCS and now CAPS. State advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned curriculum.

v) What needs improvement in our current curriculum?

vi) If you were in charge of curriculum development in South Africa and could make one change that would improve Grade 12 learner performance, what would you do?

vii) What more can be done to improve Grade 12 learner performance?

**Exit question**

viii) Is there anything else you would like to mention about curriculum in South Africa and Grade 12 learner performance?

**Closure**

Thank you very much for participating in the focus group interview today as well as sharing your views and ideas on this topic. May God bless you all.

## APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH TEACHERS

### Welcome

Good afternoon and welcome to our discussion. Thanks for agreeing to be part of the focus group. I appreciate your willingness to participate.

### Introduction

My name is Jacobine Letshwene, I am a teacher at Dawnview high school, currently enrolled with UNISA as a PhD student. I'm here to ask about your perceptions and experience about curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance.

### Purpose

The reason I am having this focus group discussion is to identify challenges that you face daily when implementing the curriculum. I want to know what you like with the CAPS, what you don't like and how can CAPS be improved. I am having discussions like this with three urban schools and three township secondary schools in the Ekurhuleni North District. I will be writing brief notes during our discussion.

### Ground rules

You are invited because you are curriculum implementers. There are no wrong answers but rather different points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful. I would like everyone to participate. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while. What is said in this room stays here. I will appreciate if you put your phones on silence so that we are not interrupted. In respect for each other, I ask that only one individual speak at a time in the group.

You've probably noticed the microphone. I am tape recording the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very useful things in these discussions and I can't write fast enough to get them all down. You are assured of complete confidentiality. The report will go back to Department of Basic Education to help them plan for future programmes. Are there any questions?

Well, let's begin. I have placed name cards on the table in front of you to help me remember your names. If you are, therefore, if you agree to participate in this discussion, kindly read and sign the attached consent form.

**Focus group interview questions**

**Engagement question**

i) How do you perceive and experience the CAPS curriculum in South Africa?
ii) What curriculum factors do you think contribute to poor Grade 12 learner performance regarding the learners, time allocation for syllabus completion, availability of resources and school environment? Please elaborate each factor?

**Exploration questions**

iii) Think back over all the years that you have been teaching and tell me your challenges as a teacher.
iv) Think back over the past years of how our curriculum has changed from Bantu syllabi, to C2005 to NCS and now CAPS. State advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned curriculum.
v) What needs improvement in our current curriculum?
vi) If you were in charge of curriculum development in South Africa and could make one change that would improve Grade 12 learner performance, what would you do?
vii) What more can be done to improve Grade 12 learner performance?

**Exit question**

viii) Is there anything else you would like to mention about curriculum in South Africa and Grade 12 learner performance?

**Closure**

Thank you very much for participating in the focus group interview today as well as sharing your views and ideas on this topic. May God bless you all.

**APPENDIX D: LETTER OF CONSENT TO HODS**

19 Blende Avenue

Croydon

1619

20 January 2017

**REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY ON CURRICULUM FACTORS AFFECTING GRADE 12 LEARNER PERFORMANCE: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Jacobine Letshwene and I am doing research under supervision of Elizabeth Du Plessis, a Professor in the College of Education towards a PhD at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled “Curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance: A multiple case study of South African secondary schools”. This study is expected to collect important information that could be of benefit to you in identifying ways to improve Grade 12 learner performance. You are invited because you are best participant to contribute appropriate information, both in terms of relevance and depth. Your knowledge, experience and expertise will greatly assist me in identifying curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance.

I obtained your contact details from your principal. I therefore kindly request you to take part in the study by participating in an individual interview after school because I do not intend to disrupt your teaching and learning process. Your role in the study is to answer the questions as honesty as possible. The questions will be based on your experience as an HOD and the challenges that you experience on a daily basis. The interview will be audio-taped and permission to record the interview will be requested before the commencement of the

interview. The interview will be conducted once and will last for 30 to 60 minutes. The information obtained will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. The benefits for participating in this study are that participants will be able to understand and identify ways in which curriculum can be effectively implemented in order to improve Grade 12 learner performance.

You will be protected from any harm by adhering to strict confidentiality. You have a right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher will know about your involvement in this research. In order to protect your identity, your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

No risks or discomforts are anticipated during and after the research process, however I cannot guarantee any risk that may come from others identifying the person's participation in the research. There are no financial benefits attached to participation in this study. Participation remains voluntarily and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. The research findings will be made available to you in keeping with research ethics.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher in a locked cupboard for future research or academic purposes and will be shredded after a period of five years. Electronic information of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable and will also be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme after five years.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Jacobine

Letshwene on Cell No. 0833360981, work No. 011 928 9014, Email address jletshwene@gmail.com The research findings are accessible for 2018. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please feel free to do so. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact my supervisor Professor Du Plessis Contact No. 012 429 4033, Email address Dplesec@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Yours sincerely

Signature…….
M. J. LETSHWENE (MRS)
PhD Student (UNISA)

**APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM OF HODS TO PARTICIPATE IN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW**

**CURRICULUM FACTORS AFFECTING GRADE 12 LEARNER PERFORMANCE: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

I_____(participant name) confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconveniences of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research project, journal publications and or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print):_____

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

Research's Name & Surname JACOBINE LETSHWENE

_____

Researcher's signature Date

**APPENDIX F: LETTER OF CONSENT TO TEACHERS**


19 Blende Avenue
Croydon
1619
20 January 2017

**REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY OF CURRICULUM FACTORS AFFECTING GRADE 12 LEARNER PERFORMANCE: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Dear prospective participant

My name is Jacobine Letshwene and I am doing research under supervision of Elizabeth Du Plessis, a Professor in the DoE towards a PhD at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled “Curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance: A multiple case study of South African secondary schools”. This study is expected to collect important information that could be of benefit to you in identifying ways to improve Grade 12 learner performance. You are invited because you are best participants to contribute appropriate data, both in terms of relevance and depth. Your knowledge, experience and expertise will greatly assist me in identifying curriculum factors affecting Grade 12 learner performance.

I obtained your contact details from your HOD. I therefore kindly request you to take part in the study by participating in a focus group interviews which will include five to eight teachers from different departments after school because I do not intend to disrupt your teaching and learning process. Your role in the study is to answer the questions as honest as possible. The questions will be based on your experience as a teacher and the challenges that you experience on a daily basis. The interview will be audio-taped and concerned to do so will

be obtained from you before the commencement of the interview. Focus group interview will be conducted once and will last for 30 to 60 minutes. The information obtained will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. This study is expected to collect important information that could be of benefit to you in identifying ways to improve Grade 12 learner performance.

You will be protected from any harm by adhering to strict confidentiality. You have a right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher will know about your involvement in this research. In order to protect your identity, your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

No risks or discomforts are anticipated during and after the research process, however I cannot guarantee any risk that may come from others identifying the person’s participation in the research. There are no financial benefits attached to participation in this study. Participation remains voluntarily and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. The research findings will be made available to you in keeping with research ethics.

**APPENDIX G: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

**CURRICULUM FACTORS AFFECTING GRADE 12 LEARNER PERFORMANCE: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

I_____(participant name) grant consent that the information I share during the focus group may be used by Jacobine Letshwene for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print):_____

Participant Signature:_____

Researcher's Name:_____

Researchers' Signature:_____

Date:_____

**APPENDIX H: AN EXAMPLE OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW WITH HOD NO. 2: COMMERCE**

1. How do you perceive and experience the implementation of the CAPS in South Africa?

Obviously, CAPS was a migration from, you know the NCS, so to speak, em within subject specific, you know looking at Business Studies in particular I think one of the things that I was uncomfortable with the outcomes associated with NCS, but now those outcomes are no longer there, its simpler, its friendlier, em CAPS will articulate em the items that need to be covered you know in the four terms that we have. You know you can see the synergy, you can see the flow, the syllabus is a little bit detailed, and is now up to date unlike em, unlike in the past, you know I'm looking at legislation for example, there have been some amendments in terms of what the students should cover, as far as legislation is concerned, but I think CAPS friendlier than the NCS,

2. What curriculum factors do you think contribute to poor Grade 12 learner performance? Please elaborate each factor.

> *I think it's the implementation of the curriculum in the sense that the syllabus its self is a little bit long vis à vis the time in which needs to be completed, let's take second term for example which coincide with the midyear, we only have about six weeks of learning and teaching and if you look at what is supposed to be covered during that time it would normally be accommodated in the first term or third term. The time that is given or provided for to complete the syllabus I think is a little bit compromised.*

And do you have enough resources?

> Interviewee: *Well for my subject I think I should, but there is need to make use of technology more often because students are still being given notes, using the chalkboards, whereas it could be on the projector and the students can interact with that kind of technology, and em there is also a use of textbooks. Students don't love textbooks anymore and you know, they should be able to use tablets for example, they can put all their textbooks in one tablet and they can carry the tablet anywhere, they can revise anywhere unlike carrying a big sachet with 12 subjects in that sachet whereas it can be compressed into just one tablet.*

Interviewer: Does you SBA's prepare the learners towards the exam?

Interviewee: *What I have seen is that they normally would reproduce in the examination certain items that they have indicated or done in the SBA. I think it does but to a very little extent because what is then extracted doesn't cover the whole, the whole syllabus. I think it forces them to revise in one way or the another*.

3. Think back over all the years that you have been teaching and tell me your challenges as a teacher.

*Look, there are couple of challenges but one of the most or the greatest challenge is learner-centred in a sense that our learners do not have the interest. They lack that intrinsic motivation to learn you know. They want to be pushed to do everything you know, you have to force them to do homework, you have to force them to read, you have to force them to…, I think the whole structure of socialization is a problem because parents I don't think they are involved looking at the nature of the South African wife life, you know parents work, some of them work very far away. They have to work up early as four o' clock to get a taxi, get a train and when they come back they are tired they do not interact with the children. Children are basically living on their own unlike in the old good days where a parent would ask you, did you do this, show me your and and also I think the issue of rights, you know learners have so many rights, you know learners have so many rights, how far can I go if a student says I dint do my work, I phoned the parent, the parent says I cannot come to school, then what should I do, detain him, he will tell me I don't have the resources, I can't do this, I need to go research, so some of those things that make in terms of teaching a little bit challenging. There are kids that make teaching and learning a little bit unfriendly in the sense that they are not interested. I will go back to intrinsic motivation is key to every achievement because if you have learners who are wheelbarrows, how far and how long can you keep on pushing them we get to a point to say look as long as I do my bit, if they don't do their bit they are the ones who are going to write examinations, life goes on but which is a bad spirit though*.

4. Think back over the past years of how our curriculum has changed from Bantu syllabus, to C2005 to NCS and now CAPS. State advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned curriculum.

*Looking at Business per se I would say CAPS has been more simplified, its more simpler to instruct, its straight forward, the outcomes are very clear, for Business in particular its quite relevant to the business environment in which we find ourselves*

*in, it gives students the opportunity to interact with the environment, it tries to invigorate the students to love the business environment, to understand what businesses are coming from and the challenges around businesses, I think for that CAPS is a plus. My only problem is some SBA's are done over two to three years you know the repeat the same SBA. You can imagine the child who has a brother or who knows someone who has done the same SBA, what stops them from asking, they can help each other in that regard.*

*When you look at the disadvantage of CAPS, I think they tried to address so many things at once because if you look at what needs to be done as part of maybe syllabus completion thats a bit too much for the timeframe so in a way toning down in an amount of work that still needs to be covered. The other thing is that I believe that when you compare our education system here with other countries you realise that it does not necessarily streamline learners when they get to high school as according to career preferences. They will only get to that stage when they passed matric but when you look at other education systems, you realise that the time they get to high school already they are focusing on what they need to do at an earlier age and that actually helps them in… you know, in putting more effort, being goal orientated in a way so that they can achieve at the higher level.*

*Another thing about CAPS is progression. I don't like progression, this world of progression makes mockery of teacher's efforts because if you are going to progress a learner, who else fail, you are actually saying it does not matter, you can pass or you can fail, em I do not understand this philosophy that a student must not get a zero, zero is a mark, if they do not perform they get a zero. Why should we shy away from…, I think it's a perceptual problem in the thinking of the powers that all be that all learners are academic orientated, there would be somebody who would not be academic orientated. If you write accounting for example and he gets a zero what do you do? Do you give him a one to avoid a zero? I think its a problem, and that again it compromises the quality of teaching and learning because teachers will do things to things to avoid that zero mark or give something that is easier just for a student to get 10 or 20 and get away from the whole issue of why did you give a zero, justify a zero. It becomes a teacher's problem it's like a teacher is been punished that that child is not doing their bit.*

5. What needs improvement in our current curriculum?

*Em, look what needs to be done is to improve the delivery mode, the instruction mode in a sense that we need to go technological wise. We need to make learning interesting you know, students must go to class, they must love the environment. The issue of writing, continuous writing, continuous writing, I think support must be there. We must beef up our libraries, for example in our school the library is there but they only go there to do what, to play games, play chess. It's not quite supportive to the curriculum that is there because the books that are there are obsolete books, they are not relevant. Then the idea of Gauteng online which sarcastically has been labelled Gauteng offline was a noble idea to support the curriculum delivery but it is not happening that way, so we need to look at the technology, we need to look at the support, we need to look at simplifying the reading material and and and…*

6. If you were in charge of curriculum development in South Africa and could make one change that would improve Grade 12 learner performance, what would you do?

*The biggest change that I would actually introduce was to make sure that emmm, instead of…, from Grade 10 learners can be identified according to the subjects or career choices that they can actually excel, so instead of burdening them with subjects that they are not going to use in the future. I find it pointless, so maybe in a way, if learners can do a maximum of three subjects, for example, if they are into sciences, then they do three subjects at matric level, that is Maths, Physics and Life sciences, then if they are into commercials they do Accounting, Maths and Business Studies or Economics in order to get the learners who are career focused. Learners will actually achieve to the best of their abilities without actually been burdened by other subjects that they may not even use in the future.*

*I would also obviously, a strange one, I would obviously take off SBA's, why because SBA inflate the performance of a student and SBA's are a problem in a sense that at the end of the year, we are told there shouldn't be a gap between SBA and the test mark but yet when they do the SBA, it's a research, they have got all the material in front of them A student can get 100% and get 5% for the examination because he did not read for the examination. So to take up…, the student can marginally pass because SBA mark is very good. Let's put it this way a student does not write the examination because they will say they've got an SBA mark, what is gonna happen to that student, he's gonna an 80% but is that the true reflection of his performance? What are we testing, are we testing research or are we testing knowledge? So I will*

*take off the SBA or I will reduce the percentage of the contribution they make to the final mark by the SBA.*

7. What more can be done to improve Grade 12 learner performance?

I believe that there is quite a lot that has been done but if policy was made to agree with the inputs that are coming from educators, that are coming from the relevant stakeholders, it can actually have positive impact on the matric results because when you look at the performance at matric, it is also influenced by the saw called progressed learners. So if something can be done about that then maybe at the end of the day… Even though we may be talking about 100% pass rate but we will know that whatever learners we are producing at the exit point are quality learners.

8. Is there anything else you would like to mention about curriculum in South Africa and Grade 12 learner's performance?

*Look the structure is, the structure is okay perhaps the examining of the Grade 12 I think needs…, particularly in term one and term three. I think because they write an exit examination, they should be tested by the district in everything else that they do because if they are tested locally, teachers can set that wish they think students will pass and yet at the end and unfortunately so because they do not mark the final examination, it does not prepare the students sufficiently, the must understand that somebody else will set or they must read broadly and widely. I think this Grade 12s need to be supported, you know the SSIP programme is a good programme then it should have rolled out to every school. It should not be a privilege of certain schools, township school and then in the Model C school we do not enjoy some of the things because we are told we are a fee-paying school and parents are not paying school fees for us to support them to look for teachers who can do remedial and and… So the government needs to support to improve learner performance, then em there is issue of subjects, how do student choose subjects, the streamlining of I think there is a need to relook at the streamlining of subjects because we must understand that not every day can do Maths but if we are going say every day we is doing this subject must do Maths then it because a problem. Students will choose the subjects that they think they can do because of a particular career and yet they cannot do or perform very well so the streamlining of subjects needs to be done to enhance eventual performance of the Grade 12s and maybe schools must organise camps, they must outsource to boost the performance.*

**APPENDIX I: AN EXAMPLE OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH THE TEACHERS**

1. How do you perceive and experience the implementation of the CAPS curriculum in South Africa?

   Economics teacher: *What do I think of CAPS? I think it's, its, er who ever came up with CAPS, okay, it is helpful somehow because you are able to track teachers who are not teaching, but at the same time CAPS does not give us that opportunity for us, to to…, you know, for proper intervention especially as far as those learners who did not assimilate with the subject matter, so you cannot go back and say yaah, let me go back and revisit the topic again because you have to finish on this day so eya (it) disadvantages.*

   Accounting teacher: *For me as an accounting educator, it's okay. I think because I give myself time, you know, meaning extra lessons as much as I agree with my colleague, ugothi (it means) CAPS does not give enough time during the given hours, however, er like I said for me, it's actually fine because there is information that I didn't get as a learner during my time, so now accounting learners are able to actually learn a lot of things for example, auditing, so it's not bad and regarding paperwork, there is a lot, however, the department has given us a lot like lesson plans and ATPs.*

2. What curriculum factors do you think contribute to poor Grade 12 learner performance? Please elaborate each factor.

   Economics teacher: *Number one, time, because if you look at our curriculum it does not last for 12 months as stipulated on their plan. Right now, we will be closing for June holidays and then three to four weeks' time they will be writing their preliminary examination, then come back its another two weeks they start with their final examinations. I think time as compared to the previous years.*

   Life sciences teacher: *Yes, they should also reduce some subjects like LO. Not that I am targeting it, they could reduce the periods of LO especially when you go to Grade 12, from Grade 10, in fact, as much as one lesson per cycle. There is no reason to load learners with guidance, it's not academic as such, it's not.*

   Accounting teacher: *and just to add on LO, as educator in our subjects we actually guide and counsel them, we give them guidance, we talk to them like for example, they want to do B. com, whatever B. com we actually give them information and you*

*talk to them as a parent as well. We do that, and I think all the other educators are doing that in their subjects, so really iLO (LO) is taking a lot of our time.*

Economics teacher: *Actually you must write it down that they must do away with this LO and employ full time guidance counsellors in schools because if you look at the curriculum the content that they are doing for LO, it's something that we do on a daily basis as my colleague has said. Lo is just an extra subject that has been put there, I don't know by who and for what. It does not serve the purpose. It serves no purpose especially in Grade 12.*

Accounting teacher: *Another thing I forgot to mention is that when coming to accounting to be specific, I wish we could go back and do accounting from Grade 8 rather than mixing it with Economics and Business Studies. Those subjects actually learners are able to read you know. Learners should start choosing subjects in Grade 8 not Grade 10.*

Life Sciences teacher: *The other factor contributing to Grade 12 failings, is that in 12 years there is only one externally evaluated level, which is Grade 12. So from Grade 1 to Grade 12 learners may in some circumstances may be cheated to believe that they are capable, you understand because it's not externally evaluated level. If there was another level, one level somewhere down that was externally evaluated.*

NS teacher: *I am an old apartheid teacher; these learners they don't have the foundation. Number two, the confusion that the department has done concerning, let me talk about Maths previously. Mathematics is the one that makes the kids be aware you know, to be scared of Mathematics because they don't get the foundation in the Intermediate phase, in the foundation phase. I was teaching a Grade 4 Maths. I requested the principal to go down because the Grade 7's was failing. You will find that you will blame the teachers in Grade 12 yet the foundation teacher did not start with the good foundation and then when I was trying to teach this kids, unfortunately I am a pensioner, i am 62 years old, but then two years that I spent with the Grade 4's and 5's I could realise that they were better than the Grade 7's. For example, one set of Maths being equivalent fractions, that's the example I can give you, you will find that the Grade 7's does not know what is an equivalent fraction, yet if the foundation was there in Grade 4 then they will go up with mathematics. There are a lot of things that I can say in Maths, that the subject I understand better.*

*I teach NS and Technology, this thing of integration, integrating the subjects is the worst, we no more going to do Physical science and chemistry. Technology they added something which of course we know technology, Physical science and chemistry go hand in hand. A child must focus on one subject, technology. We are not gifted the same way. These kids carry lots of books here, lots of books, social sciences which of course was social study, the mixture of the History and Geography. To separate the History and Geography… There must be focus on the kids so that when they go up there when you go to Grade 8 and 9 you start telling them about Geography and then you start telling them about History. They must reduce the subjects. I think so, they must reduce totally, I'm begging, I wish I can be in the media for that (laughing). I wish, because there are lots of subjects. They are nine ma'm imagine. One other thing being the worst of them all, you tell the HOD that learners must not start Grade 1 being six years old please, they must finish up their seven years. Their brain in psychology we say this is a slate, it is still clean. When you are teaching a learner in class, because everything is still fine. She grasps everything but when she arrives in Grade 5, they start making noise, they are bored. I found one learner here, she is 12 years old in Grade 8 which is highly impossible, she is supposed to be in Grade 6. You know what is going there, er… the brain will be full and she won't concentrate any longer. And then I will say as a black parent my child was good when she was taught by such and such but because its Mrs such and such she is not coping, it means that teacher is not doing well. That seven years is very important.*

Maths teacher: *Another contributing factor for high failure rate in Grade 12 is progressed learners and it's been done by the department. At the end of the day they blame the teachers, they will blame the HOD's, whoever, but they are the one who are causing all these because they said number one, they are just developing the policy which is even difficult for them to apply like for example, if a child is not coping in a certain grade, they say that the child must not reaped the same grade for age cohort. You know what, it means starting from Grade 8 you will find that the learners didn't pass or doesn't pass any grade, is just because of age cohort, up until Grade 12. There is no way that the learner will pass Grade 12. They are the ones who are causing all this.*

Life sciences teacher: *Just to add on what she said, we are trying to push everyone. The reality is not everyone is capable of going to matric. I think what the department*

*was supposed to do is to come up with another level where the learners can write national examinations so that they can have a certain certificate and maybe they can go to vocational training with a certain certificate and only those who are capable can actually proceed to matric. But it's like everyone should pass through matric that's why now most these learners are failing. The other thing is once the learners they know that if you repeat er… certain level once, for example, if you repeat Grade 10, its automatic that you go to Grade 12 whether you pass or fail, that is a contributing factor. If they knew that they are going to remain on that grade, then they were going to concentrate because it's like now I am also teaching Grade 12, there are certain learners who are in Grade 11, who repeated Grade 10. I heard that they are saying I will go to Grade 12 you understand. You tell them that let's do the work, they say no, we don't have to because we are going to go to Grade 12 anyway*.

Afrikaans teacher: *I think sir mentioned a good point for external examination, I wrote external examination in Grade 6 and then in Grade 9. That thing is a good thing to assess even to shift because we used to have first class, second class and third class had to repeat. There should be these sub-external examinations. The thing that I am concerned with ma'm is that the people who are really focusing on the subjects, some of them were never in the classroom, that's the most part. Even setting the examination, I was assessing some of the question papers in Joss High. I was teaching Grade 11 and 12 neh, the subject advisor s also, they take advantage that they are subject advisors. They just delegate, let's say you are good in Afrikaans you set paper one, you ma'm you set paper two. She is sitted. They are not relying on their work, they rely on our work and the school that can be lucky to have the examiner is the one that will get 100% you get me and the school that does not have advantage of having an examiner they will always get 50% and they will always praise certain schools always because they have examiners.*

English teacher: *I just wanted to say something about the use of technology. I know that they are saying all the learners have got tablets and stuff. I don't think its benefiting the learners. It's actually destroying them. You will find that yes, those learners are having a tablet, but they are not using them for the right purpose. You will find that in most cases they are playing games, music and videos and there is nothing educational that they are using these tablets for. So, I will like to believe that the department has actually found the way of keeping us black people down there. At the time, you find that these parents are not supervising the use of these tablets.*

*You find that in matric you are saying that yes, they are matured, they are responsible, but get into the classroom you find that they are busy playing games with the tables. So, you find that yes, they are talking technology but they are actually destroying those learners. Maybe if they were to reproduce or get back to the use of the textbooks*.

NS teacher: *CAPS textbooks are empty, If I can talk about NS, the textbook does not have Natural Science inside. You will find that they teach a child to make a yoghurt, that is not science. It's part of home economics. Imagine in science teaching a learner how to make this. All these things if you can just go through reference books, some of them is just for tender sake. I have plenty of NS books; I have accumulated a lot. The old books, not to say I am praising apartheid or whatever, they have got NS, they have got biology. In our case we were not skilled to an extent that I have got a degree or what, but we were taught how to teach a child. Whether you were given whatever subject, passed it with certificate or what, it doesn't matter but we were taught how to teach a child. When we arrive in the classroom, you were given the resources. You prepare, you understand, you get me mam. But these textbooks even if you are in bed in hospital, no one can follow the steps of those textbooks. If there is someone to relief you, you will find the work being the way you have left it because the person who is supposed to go on with this, it's a pity. Tell them that the textbook must be revised. The teachers are also not skilled Even the workshop courses they give us… Unfortunately, I like to fight with the subject advisors concerning the content, you will find that she is the subject advisor because she has got the post. She will stand in front of you with lots of photocopies. That's nonsense. I used to tell them that its nonsense because you cannot photocopy and come and read for me the photocopies, come and teach me how to teach, that's how I confronted my subject advisors, not to say I'm rude or what ma'm. In the apartheid system when they said we were going for workshop, we were bitted like learners, they were teaching us. Another thing the so called… what is that, I remember this mock test, you will even after the workshop request a mock test to test as to whether I am doing the correct thing. When it comes to the inspection, we are not expecting you to come and harass us. You must come and ask me what is your problem and I will tell you that when I am trying to teach one plus one I get frustrated but when I say one divide by one I get a little bit of light. That is how you should do it as a subject advisor. You are there because you are my senior to teach me*.

Interviewer: How are the SBA's, are they useful?

Accounting teacher: *Mina I prefer to go back to class tests that was actually helpful then because learners were always prepared, they will always study. They know now they will get 90% for SBA even if they get 20% or whatever its fine. If we can go back to testing that is how I feel*.

Economics teacher: *Well, I feel the same. I think it's a wrong tool for assessing learners because some of these SBA's even if they do it in class they still copy and when you check the learner's examination versus the SBA you will find that the learner has passed the SBA very well but the examination marks are down*.

Accounting teacher: *Which means they don't study, they don't read. Learning to them is a no no. But when they know that they are writing a test, in fact, our program, our year program can be testing, testing and testing and not this SBA's. They will always be aware that I am going to write a test, like my colleague said, even though we give them in class as sort of a test, but some of them in our case, accounting, they bring their financial statements. Really that is not helpful. It is not going to help them for examination. It's not going to help them because they are coping from somewhere, if it is a test it is going to help them. They will always be on their toes and study all the time*.

Afrikaans teacher: *My other colleague has mentioned that the period of teaching is limited. Imagine your SBA according to the program that I found here in Johannesburg, they start the SBA maybe at the beginning of February, they expect a child again to write the test in March and then the teacher is expected to mark. You are no longer concentrating on the kids. Some of these kids they don't even know how to write the address ma'm. I'm telling you the truth, they don't know "die anhef". Im sorry, I don't teach English, and then die slot. Down there, "liggaam", the body, I mean its proper to teach the kids step by step. These kids don't have the foundation and then when they arrive at Grade 12 they become so confused. You find that the learners do not even understand the language itself. This is a drama, this is a novel, all this sorts of books confuses them. All these books that are called references, you will find that as a teacher you become frustrated. You are supposed to teach this novel, you teach whatever, depending on the novel, lots of questions for the SBA. They are so confusing. They need learners to be orientated, the types of questions they are expecting. Not that it will say who is the character, who is that? There are*

*different types of questions in the SBA, what I mean is try to cut a lot of work because you expect a teacher to mark at the same time there comes paper 3 to mark. HOD's will fight with the CSI here because they cannot complete their work. You will always say a teacher is lazy, a teacher is never lazy. A teacher is always doing the best to make the learner understand.*

English teacher: *Concerning SBA especially in language, every task has an essay of 450 words from January till December. Then remember each and every learner in the school is doing language so you must teach, you must mark, it is just too much work.*

3. Think back over all the years that you have been teaching and tell me your challenges as a teacher.

Life sciences teacher: *African learners are not motivated enough to learn and the parents are not very much involved in their school work. They don't come to school, they don't collect reports, all those things its almost common in many of these schools.*

4. Think back over the past years of how our curriculum has changed from Bantu syllabus, to C2005 to NCS and now CAPS. State advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned curriculum.

Maths teacher: *Advantage of CAPS is that we share ideas, they bring er…, unlike apartheid they will slap you for telling the teacher the correct thing. You were not allowed to tell the teacher that when the teacher writes the wrong statement especially in Maths you find that you can kill a cat in different ways but the apartheid teachers were not allowing that. If they teach you one plus one with stones, you must do it the same way. This system the kids can explore. They explore even the teacher who is not equipped enough where by learners will come and share with us, this one sill come with this idea, the other one will come with another idea. The only disadvantage is that when the teacher…, some of the teachers like I have mentioned the background of poor learners, the teacher is lazy to teach the learner go and ask mom. Unfortunately, I will differ with the parents that were not even at school like my mom. How is this parent going to help me, she can't read, she can't write but she is willing like my mom was unfortunately, but she could see the book is red, red means you are not doing well. She will tell you that you have failed even if she can't read.*

Accounting teacher: *Mina (for me) it's the levels like ma'm has said at high school level. I am not linked to what is happening in FET. Learners are actually happy that if they achieve 30% that's good for them. However, that does not allow them to further their studies. So if that could be emphasised for you to pass at varsity or wherever achieve 50%. However, our DoE does not actually emphasise that enough. So if can actually go back to them because we had to get 50% at school before you succeed.*

Life sciences teacher: *The syllabus is too long then the teachers end up lecturing not teaching these learners because of the syllabus and the issue that learners are not allowed to repeat the grade twice. This one is killing our results. We are no longer getting the results because of these.*

Maths teacher: *The first thing I will start with is the Annual Teaching Plan versus the syllabus coverage. We were talking about the SBA recently, you will find that the SBA recently, you will find that SBA that you are supposed to give the learner covers everything for the term but the date that they are giving us in the ATP they say that you have to give these SBA on the 24th of May whereas the week which are covers the whole term. So if they can fix all those things, will go back because of the time. There are lots of information even though when it comes to progression. mathematics, they tried to remove some of the topics which are not having progression from the previous grade to another grade, but still the syllabus is too long. They finish more pressure to the educator to finish. You will find Maths educators finishing the syllabus on time. the problem is the ATP is saying something, then the topic that you need to cover are a lot in a short space of time, now if they can consider all those and make sure that they must be realistic like now, if you check the ATP, it allows us to teach up until the last day of the term which is impossible because learners are writing examinations. We cannot do that and even the expectations from the department itself. They will see that by this term you must be done with the syllabus whereas the ATP is divided into three terms, I'm referring to Grade 12s. There are topics to recovered in the first term, second term and third term but we have to squeeze everything within two terms, first and second term because we are expected to finish the syllabus at the end of the second term which is highly impossible. In Mathematics you won't. You can't do that unless if you are just giving them handouts for them to cram and which is impossible. You can't cram Mathematics. You have to teach and you have to go back and research but because of how they have structured this context, you can't even do reflection. We can write*

*that I did reflection but to tell you the truth I didn't do that. I don't have time, at least one-on-one session with my learners. I can see now I was marking paper 2, they are failing paper 2, but where I am going to get the time to redo all those topics with those learners, hence I am still having a work for term 3, which I am expected to finish all these within these two terms. These are the challenges that we are having. Even the facilitators when they come now i know they will come and say how far are you with the syllabus, okay, they expecting us to say we are done and to tell the truth we are not done.*

NS teacher: *The kids when they are supposed to do multiplication, addition, subtraction and division. These are the terms we use for that like caution, sum, product, those are the things that they should have been taught in primary but unfortunately everything is being put in the mouth at the same time. They compare black kids that do not have the foundation with the white school. I have been in white school ma'm, the primary one. I have rotated, the white schools they've got their own program. When the department sent the program, they just put it away, do away with the department's program. I want to be honest and open with you, they continue with their own program. Just go and visit them as if you are educated ma'm. Most black facilitators they don't attack white schools. To find solution, go to white schools and find out how they really progress, so that we can adapt their styles. To adapt a style is not a sin because we will end up taking out our kids to white schools. Discipline is a problem, if you chase them out its a disadvantage and advantage because if you don't chase him he will disrupt the whole class. You see, wa itshwara o molato wa e tlogela o molato (you leave it you are wrong, you deal with it you are still wrong). All those things, I mean they need to be evaluated.*

Maths teacher: *To add on what I was saying, if you check the difference between NCS and CAPS, NCS yes in Maths, they were having paper 1, 2 and 3. Now we only have paper 1 and 2 but believe you me, the time. All those topics which were in paper 3 are now in paper 2, but they didn't add the time, you get that. We have to squeeze everything in the same ATP. They are expecting these kids to pass at the end of the year, they changed, they know that okay, a trigonometry covers a lot of work unlike geometry. Initially they were saying geometry covers 46% of the total marks than trigonometry is 40%, now its vice versa. They changing because trig covers a lot of work, its 46%, then geometry is 40%. What are they doing, are they adding time on that. No, we have to cover in trigonometry. There are a lot of things to do. They will*

*tell you to finish this within four days, now they are not talking about a month, they are talking about days. One of the contributing factor is progression of these learner. Progressed learners do not have a background, you have to start from trigonometry for Grade 10 while you are teaching them in Grade 12 and you are expected to finish the syllabus and these kids who doesn't even have the background must have a distinction in Mathematics which is impossible. I hate what the government is doing to us.*

NS teacher*: I taught one learner in Grade 8 extra class in Polokwane. He came to my class so that I can help him. He was in Grade 8, he could hardly do Grade 4 work, Grade 4 work, just imagine. We will keep on complaining, we can sit here until the following year but if the government doesn't care about the foundation phase, we will always have a problem.*

5. What needs improvement in our current curriculum?

Accounting teacher: *I don't really know how they assess from Grade 1 to Grade 7 but it looks like there is no link. The thing is we are expected to do wonders however if you look at learners in Grade 8, it's clear that whatever they have been doing from Grade 1 to 7 has nothing to do with what we are doing here now. They are so confused, they make noise, they smoke, they do all sorts of things because of frustration. So if they can just change that and do the testing. Through testing there, let them read, let them do everything they are expected to do at high school level because the department concentrate on achieving 100% matric pass rate. We can't really because when we receive them at high school level, you start from scratch. To me it's like testing is not properly done at lower level.*

NS teacher: *But some of us like I was trying my best to explain, I want to give an example of what you are saying. We are also cheats for high school. We just pass some topics even if you are given enough time to teach the kids. I was an HOD ma'm, you will find that some teachers are always sitted in the staffroom but they will also blame the foundation phase teachers. In the foundation phase they must go and revisit the foundation syllabus. The same thing that I am giving an example of for equivalent fraction, there is no way a child can start doing multiplication of 12 in Grade 1, can you imagine, it is happening. Equivalent fraction they do from Grade 1 and 3 and imagine that the Grade 7's does not even cope. All these things are just a mess. These people do not communicate with the teachers before they change the syllabus.*

6. If you were in charge of curriculum development in South Africa and could make one change that would improve Grade 12 learner performance, what would you do?

Maths teacher: *The first thing I will do is do away with this projects. Some of the projects are useless, like the one we are having under MST Maths. I'm telling you, whoever started that thing, that project is not working at all. Instead of improving the mentality of this kids, its destroying them. We can even check the order of the topics. Maths we know that we have a content, a syllabus which is been followed according to the level of difficulty, but now what is going on this MST project, you will find that its geometry, now we have to teach geometry. The learner doesn't know about the line but you have to start with triangle. There is no dot, you draw a line, learner will measure, but you must start with measuring an angle there. Where does that angle come from? The learner doesn't know because there is nothing. Let's go to the memo, whoever did whatever, trying to assess, assessment doesn't even have a sign. We know that we have four operationalism. We have addition, subtraction, divisions and multiplication. there is no such thing, but the memo is going that side, the question is going that side and went (you) as an educator they will say you have to improvise. What is that that I have to do because I didn't set the paper. Then okay, they say this is June examination. there are lots of mistakes. There is no mark allocation. You can't even understand what is it that they're doing okay. Now they are saying its Maths Olympiad for Grade 8 and 9, there again it's a mess. You don't even know what to tell the learners, ma'm, what is it? And you as an educator you are seeing this for the first time. The memorandum is wrong; question paper doesn't even have a meaning. You won't even understand the objective of assessment. the projects are below the standard. the provincial paper is something else. How are you going to drill those learners to be able to answer those questions, even the department itself is confused.*

Economics teacher: *My problem is what, they must get rid of icompetitions (competitions) ya ma (of the) province. They are putting pressure on the MEC and the uMEC (the MEC) ko madirectors (to the directors) and umadirectors (the directors) to the principals, and then uthole ukuthi amaskolweni (you find that at schools) teachers are unable to teach so that the child can assimilate with the information. Utechere uyafundisa (A teacher is teching) because I'm expected to be here you know. the department can be a pain sometimes, sorry for my language. They forever want syllabus completion, so the teacher is worried about completing*

*the syllabus more than making sure that abantwana (the learners) understand and pass at the end of the year. You see where there is a problem, there is too much paperwork needed continuously. Even the competition, Panyasa will stand there and say nna (I) want my province gore e thole (that it can get) 98% for Maths, knowing very well gore mo Gauteng we are not that capacitated ka (in) Maths and Science, Limpopo e tlo re shapa (will beat us). Then competitions start, ba etsa (they do) Maths olympiad, and then you find teachers running around like headless chicken, o ya bona (you see), ba funa ku enza this, ba fund ku enza that (they want to do this they want to do that). The is no like iroom ya comfort (room for comfort) like in the olden days. We used to teach, you will feel like I have seven distinctions, la kuna amabatchelors (here we have bachelors). At least the learners could assimilate with everything e u e techayo (that u are teaching). That why earlier I said iCAPS eya disadvantager (CAPS disadvantages us) somehow as far as the syllabus is concerned. They rush us, they rush us, and at that time you have learned that you need to move with. You feel like this learner did not understand, I have to go back with them but now you HOD will be at the door step knocking, syllabus completion.*

NS teacher: *Sorry ma'm, another thing that worries me is the terminology. The terms that they are using now SBA, what what what. You know what they are confusing sometimes. Let me go back to what, FET, the streams are very much important. We are not gifted the same way ma'm. These learners cannot all of them do Mathematics. We used to have needle work, they destroyed the needle work. Introduce physical education, I heard sir saying destroy LO. The LO mixed physical education with the LO. And this technology they mixed it with the art, art must be art ma'm, and technology must be technology. A child must focus, focus on Maths Literacy for those who cannot do Maths. These streams are very important. We are not gifted the same way. You can teach for 50 years but we are not gifted the same way. I mean these stream must be introduced back. Then they must not be stingy of paying the teachers. They must have plenty of posts. One last thing, this thing of more learners in the classroom 50 to 60 learners. This is too much, overcrowded and the government doesn't… Ma'm, call those people to come and visit here please. I mean they must assist, yes, learners cannot sit… I mean if you sit in a dirty house, your brain also is even dirty. It doesn't get fresh air. I mean we must also motivate our learners in a good way. Telling them that we have got new computers. Look at the computers that we are using here, if you go to white schools you don't get this boxes*.

Economics teacher: *And ma'm, as she said ukuthi (that) we must introduce ago needle work naninani (whatever whatever), I think ulithi (that) our learners especially in black schools are disadvantaged. You know at the end of the day when they look at the results, we are assessed the same. Whether we've got 12 learners in Model C schools. If you look at black schools, we have more than 250 matric learners. Go to Benoni high, you will find that they've got 30 learners who are doing matric. They know exactly from Grade 10; they start nurturing these kids. If your child has a learning barrier in Grade 11, you are called to take your child to technical school but with us… I know, its black parents as well. We want our children to pass matric, they are forced to go to matric. At the end of the day the principals are adding pressure that all the teachers must get 100%. Mma Zulu is teaching 15 learners, Seshai is teaching 150 learners, I am teaching six learners, 100%, 100%, 100% expected. Do you see the assessment; it does not work.*

7. What more can be done to improve Grade 12 learner performance?

NS teacher: *Workload, the teachers are given more periods. Yes, you will find that the teacher is given six classes for the language, imagine. How are you going to cope, six classes, that is too much and that thing really is even killing the teacher. The teacher will collapse. Depression is there. I was teaching Grade 8 four classes and Grade 12 two classes. To improve Grade 12 results if I compare with other countries, because I want to compare an apple with an apple right. In other countries what they do with metric teachers, their workload they reduce it. The workload of matric teachers should not be equivalent to the workload of Grade 8 and 9 teachers, why, because matric, teacher need more time to prepare the matric, so that they are able to pass. Now the major problem that is here now, here is a matric teacher, a lot of load. Other things I will just end up doing window dressing, instead of preparing my learners I will just do window dressing because of the workload.*

Accounting teacher: *Well, I'm not against his point but my take here is that learners here must be prepared as early as Grade 1. We must groom them as early as Grade 1 so that even if our workload is equal in Grade 12 we don't feel the stress because we receive prepared learners. These Grade 12 window dressing is really disadvantaging us because we concentrate there instead of concentrating on the foundation. Like I said before, they must just revisit the method of assessing from Grade 1 to 12 not that in Grade 1 they are just progressed with their whatever that is*

*they do. There is no formal testing that is actually not right because when you go up, the testing, the method of testing must be actually done, although the levels must not be done but a learner in Grade 1 must understand that I must get a test so that the teacher must check that I am reading, rather than expecting learners to be clever in the higher grades so level of assessment should be similar, whether you are a Grade 1 teacher do justice Grade 12 teacher, do justice so that the learners don't suffer.*

Economics teacher: *It means this system has been a flop from Grade R. From Grade R, the culture of learning is not instilled earlier in life.*

8. Is there anything else you would like to mention about curriculum in South Africa and Grade 12 learner's performance?

Economics teacher: *Hae, they need to revisit, they must, you see this thing is about politics. It's all about politics because ga go kena ba (when these ones are in power), they want to change the curriculum. I'm telling you, once we get this minister again, o thola gore (u will find that) they will come up with their curriculum and it disadvantages us because now we have to leave this. One other thing, teachers in the olden days we used to be trained, they wouldn't just phara you with umosebenzi (give you the work) without training. These days they just give teachers promotional posts, no foundation, nothing, ha u yazi kuthi o anele o enzeni (you don't know what to do). So they must retrain teachers, resell them*.

Accounting teacher: *And to add on what she said, as teachers lets again blame ourselves that even though we realise that things are changing, some of us are not doing anything about it. We complain about money, we complain that we don't earn a lot, however as an educator, we are known as lifelong learners. We need to go to school and register. I was teaching economics in KZN and at college we only did perfect market and simple graphs, demand and supply, so when things changed to NCS, I decided to register because the other markets now, the imperfect markets, we did not actually do a lot of them. There were no graphs actually when it comes to monopoly and oligopoly, new syllabus there are graphs for those markets. I registered but some teachers do not care. They are always complaining about the fact that I don't have money. We all don't have, we try. We like amafree bees (free things) too much.*

Life sciences teacher: *The department is not doing justice especially to black schools. They come up with noble ideas that we can… To all the schools that I have been to, Gauteng online has always been off line. It has never worked. Tablets are not going to bring results. They are just confusing our learners even further. Tablets was a project which was supposed to bring the learners and the educators but now they only gave learners. And now for example we supposed to use the tablet in conjunction with the smart boards and some educators went for training for smart boards so until the educators resign there are no smart boards. Now the learners are playing with the tablets because there is nothing inside. If they had something to learn then they were going to learn, now nothing, that's why they are failing.*

Economics teacher: *When it comes to giving learners tablets, I think it was a tender and loyo muntu loyo o fakhe invoice yakhe (that person submitted his or her invoice) the government has paid him now this person has moved to prisoners. He is giving prisoners laptops and tablets. They must stop tenderizing education. All these start here in Gauteng, it doesn't happen in other provinces. And we fail here in Gauteng. They must channel that money so that teachers must update themselves, then they will get the results. Like ama (those) tablets, they are not going to bring results*.

NS teacher: *Ma'm, just pass this message, every teacher must get the laptop*.

Accounting teacher: *And lastly ma'm, they must involve educators when they do their planning of curriculum and whatever.*

Economics teacher: *That's a good point and policy making as well. Invite teachers, not that we are like dwarf teachers, there are things that we know. So when they formulate their policies circulate memos in schools. Just invite teachers who want to go and contribute or ba etse (just do) research nje nkawe, nje oya bona (just like you, you see).*