Art. #1947, 9 pages, https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v42n2a1947

Circuit managers' views on quality education at selected public schools in the Limpopo province, South Africa

Nndwamato Ndou <a>U



Department of Early Childhood Education, College of Education, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa ndoun@unisa.ac.za

This article is premised on the notion that the success of an education system depends entirely on the strong leadership and synergy at all its levels. The intention with this article was to assess the extent to which the circuit managers' views on quality education is affecting its provision at public schools. A Systems Thinking Approach to Leadership guided the study reported on here in which a qualitative research methodology was used. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis to ensure data triangulation and guarantee the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Ten participants were purposively selected from 5 districts in the Limpopo province. The findings reveal that circuit managers' varied views on quality education negatively influence their curriculum delivery, support, and responsibilities entrusted to them. As there is little improvement in the provisioning of basic quality education, I argue for the strengthening of the circuit offices and suggest ways in which they could be utilised to improve the quality of basic education in public schools. The implications of the findings suggest capacity building of effective supervision and monitoring of the provision of quality support by circuit managers.

Keywords: assessment; education system; effectiveness; equitable distribution; implementation; inclusivity; quality assurance; quality education

Introduction

Globally, successful school leadership is increasingly regarded as a key factor in an efficient and effective schooling system. The current debate about school leadership is, however, often dominated by an overarching approach, namely, instructional leadership. More often than not circuit managers are in constant contact with school principals during service meetings and other workshops and seminars but they seldom meet teachers to discuss matters of development and support. Circuit managers and school leaders are held equally accountable for the quality of teaching and for how much learners learn (Steyn, 2008). In light of the above, scholars conducted several studies on the role of circuit managers in the provisioning of quality education in public schools, however, they were silent on the perceptions of the circuit managers on the concept of quality education. Sambo (2011) used soft system methodology (SSM), a practitioner research methodology, to foster organisational learning in poor performing schools. The study focused on the role of circuit managers and school management teams in providing instructional leadership and curriculum management to provide quality education in rural public schools. Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014) researched and discuss the need to capacitate circuit managers in carrying out their mandate in the school development. Ndlovu (2017) focused on leadership and management of schools towards the provision of quality education in public schools. An African scholar, Namanya (2019) suggests that there is a need to understand the concept of quality education, although only teachers were the targeted population for this study. It is against this background that I aimed to investigate circuit managers' perceptions of quality education in public schools in the Limpopo province to bridge this gap in previous studies and to add to the body of knowledge on educational leadership and management.

The Role of the Circuit Manager

The concept "circuit manager" is used broadly. According to the (Department of Education [DoE], Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2011:12), a circuit manager is the head of a circuit office. He or she executes prescribed functions using powers delegated by the district director. Circuit managers play a pivotal role in school development and support – they have a strong role to play in forming school cultures that encourage change. In their quest to improve the performance of schools within the ambit of their authority, circuit managers should engage in instructional leadership and school development and support activities such as providing frequent, appropriate and school-wide development and support activities, defining and communicating a shared vision and goals for the circuit, setting up monitoring systems and providing feedback to all schools on the impact of the development and support activities provided, and expect schools to do the same (Mafuwane & Pitsoe, 2014).

The State of South African Education After 1994

The current state of South African education and that of the Limpopo province in particular, suggests that much needs to be done to improve basic education in public schools. The latest results available from the National School Effectiveness Study, which tests numeracy and literacy, show that South Africa's mean scores for literacy in Grades 3 and 4 were 19% and 27% respectively (Reddy, Visser, Winnaar, Arends, Juan, Prinsloo & Isdale, 2016). The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), a quadrennial test conducted in 57 countries, ranks South Africa almost last in its various rankings, even though the scores have

been improving. According to Motshekga (2015), South Africa's 2014 Grade 12 (Matric) learners achieved a pass rate of 75.8%. While the 75.8% pass rate represents a 2.4 percentage point drop from the 2013 pass rate of 78.2%, Motshekga (2015) said that the bar had been raised to improve the quality of examination outcomes and enhance the quality and standard of Grade 12 graduates. The pass rate in the Limpopo province was 72.9% in 2014, a 1.1 percentage point increase from 71.8% in 2013. No district performed above 88% in Limpopo. Motshekga (2015) further emphasised that the quality of education of any system is predicated on the quality of its teachers.

Unlike many African countries, South Africa has made excellent progress with access to schooling since 1994, and today 98% of children between the ages of 7 and 17 are enrolled in school. That said, according to the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU, 2015), there are still many challenges in the South African schooling system. The overarching one is systemic underperformance. The majority of learners in South Africa are not provided with quality education, and what makes matters worse, is that the quality of schooling is inequitably distributed (NEEDU, 2015).

Developmental social sciences have proven that economic and social development is not possible without increased access to education and an improvement in the quality thereof (Lewin, 2007:2). The four most notable institutional and systemic factors that prevent progress in South Africa's schooling system are the improvement of management of the education system, the improvement of the competence and capacity of school principals, a move towards results-oriented mutual accountability, and improving teacher performance and accountability (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2012:38).

Quality education is key for national development in South Africa. Caldwell and Obasi (2010) note that all nations of the world owe their level of development to the level of their educational system. Caldwell and Obasi (2010) further argue that education is the true instrument for generating all categories and levels of the workforce in any nation. Sivakumar and Sarvalingam (2010:20) are of the view that "[e]ducation is one of the basic needs for human development and to escape from poverty and is necessary for national development and a prosperous society." It is against this background that I conducted research on the circuit managers' views on quality education in public schools in the Limpopo province, South Africa.

Theoretical Frames

A Systems Thinking Approach to Leadership and instructional leadership theories were used to

collect and analyse and interpret data in this study. The rationale for using this theory was that interrelationship and interconnectedness exist between school principals and circuit managers in executing their duties of the provision of education in public schools. Senge (2006:7) developed systems thinking as a framework that makes "full patterns [of a system] clearer." In this sense, systems thinking is based on Aristotle's famous citing of a whole that is somehow greater than the sum of its parts, which would suggest an interconnected approach to leadership within the entire educational system. Shaked and Schechter (2017:699-700) define systems thinking as an "approach advocating thinking about any given issue as a whole, emphasizing the interrelationships between its components rather than the components themselves." Robertson (2015) explains leadership theory as a discipline that focuses on determining what makes successful leaders excel in what they do. Instructional leadership defines the mission and goals, design instructional programmes and promote conducive teaching and a learning school climate. Circuit managers as instructional leaders are entrusted with the responsibility of framing school goals, communicating, supervising, evaluating, coordinating, monitoring and promoting professional development and providing incentives for teachers and learners (Ndlovu, 2017).

Literature Review

In its attempt to improve the quality of education provision to all schools, the South African government has developed a strategic plan characterised by education policies and laws at all levels of education (DoE, RSA, 2008a). Therefore, the concepts of quality education, free and accessible education, minimum standards of education as well as the goals and annual targets of the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) were part of the literature review. Scholarly literature on the role of circuit mangers with special reference to quality education were consulted to critically analyse the findings and identify gaps that exists in the studies. The choice of the literature was also guided by the research question, "What are circuit managers' views on quality education at selected public schools in the Limpopo province, South Africa?"

The concept of quality education locally, nationally and internationally

The international policy community is avid about quality education. For more than two decades, attention in policies has been shifting away from issues of access, enrolment and years of schooling completed to issues of learning, skills acquisition, and teacher quality (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2007). At the beginning of this new search for

quality, quality education was only investigated from the management's point of view. The quality of educated people to be produced for the job market was usually determined by the universities and the education sector without taking the needs of the job market into account. What is the century changing in 21st conceptualisation and measurement of quality education. Quality is now viewed more in terms of learning outcomes and less in relation to the enabling conditions for learning. This policy shift between quality as input to quality as outcome partly reflects the growing availability of (comparative) evidence on learning levels and disparities from an unprecedented number of international, regional and national assessments (Kamens & Benavot, 2011; Kamens & McNeely, 2010).

The term "quality" is used universally but it has a wide range of interpretations and definitions, since it is a dynamic term. The definition of expressing quality depends upon the situation and upon the person who is using it. Quality is usually conceived in a qualitative sense where it refers to the relative quality of an entity. It is generally used to judge the degree of satisfaction of similar products and services (NEEDU, 2015). Thus, quality is a highly subjective term and is sometimes confusing as the interpretation depends on individuals and different circumstances (NEEDU, 2015). According to Mbazima (2018), quality education starts with schools that work. Mbazima (2018) concurs with the NEEDU report when arguing that quality is a difficult term to define, mainly because its meaning is normally related to the specific characteristics of the phenomenon that it seeks to describe.

It is not easy to define or give a universal description of the term "quality education", since every country prides itself in providing quality education. Teu (2002:12) admits that quality is easily defined informally but as soon as one tries to define it formally, vigorous and emotional debates ensue. According to Pigozzi (2010), quality education understands the past, is relevant to the present, and has a view to the future. Some authors argue that the threshold of quality education is met by focusing only on literacy and numeracy, but the sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a recognition that this definition is insufficient and outdated. Education is not simply a content delivery system; rather, it is a system designed to help all children reach their full potential and enter society as full and productive citizens (Press conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at United Nations Headquarters, 2012). Ki-Moon (Press conference by Secretary-General Ban Kimoon at United Nations Headquarters, 2012) argues that every child must be in school, and the quality of those schools must improve so that

learners are prepared to be productive citizens, ready to lead in the future. Education International defines quality education as the one that focuses on the whole child – the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each learner regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location. It prepares the child for life, not just for testing (NPC, 2012). It further suggests three key pillars that support quality education: ensuring access to quality teachers, providing use of quality learning tools and professional development, and the establishment of safe and supportive quality learning environments (NPC, 2012).

The quality of education is passed on in the value that the school leaver adds to the community. The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) refers to the quality of education on four occasions (RSA, 1996a).

In this study, I considered the views of other scholars to define quality education. The rationale for a broader perception of this concept was to avoid bias in posing questions to the participants as they might have dissimilar grasps of what quality education is about. According to Pigozzi (2010), quality education is a dynamic concept of which indices may vary according to the needs of the country. Pigozzi (2010) contends that quality education is one that welcomes the learner and can adapt to meeting learning needs. Quality education is inclusive in nature. Quality education strives to ensure that all learners regardless of gender, age, language, religion and ethnicity have the possibility of participating in and learning from organised learning activities.

General criteria for the assessment of quality education

The quality of education can be measured based on the criteria formulated by the United Nations. According to UNESCO (2005), education learning goals for global citizens can be categorised into dimensions, namely, knowledge (geographical and historical knowledge, diversity foreign and intercultural society, communication approaches), attitudes (openness, positive orientation, sensitivity, self-esteem, respect and tolerance), and skills (technical, critical, comparative, communication, coping and resilience skills). "Improving the quality of education for all learners everywhere is a key priority if we are to reach goals of Education for All. Without quality, access to, and equity in education cannot be fully achieved or sustained" (Hopkins, 2007:174).

Minimum standards for education in the Limpopo Province

Minimum standards for education can be measured against the National Development Plan (NDP) of

the country. Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2008) conceptualised the NDP as a process of systematic transformation of the overall social, economic, political, scientific and technological life of a nation via an effective, coherent, co-ordinate management system, a result-oriented social mobilisation strategy in which the citizens actually participate and exhibit positive attitudinal commitment in the overall reconstruction process for the improved human conditions of the people.

The LDoE expresses its vision and mission statement in its Strategic Performance Plan 2015/2016–2019/20 dated 10 March 2015. Its vision is excellence in provisioning of innovative quality basic education. The mission statement of the Limpopo province can be summarised as "providing innovative quality basic education in an innovative, effective and efficient way, maximum monitoring and support to districts, circuits and schools, continuous development of educators and officials, maximising accountability, fostering community participation and governance, ensuring equitable and efficient allocation and utilisation of resources and striving for a competent and motivated workforce."

Methodology

Qualitative data collection techniques guided by an interpretive paradigm were used in this study in an

attempt to answer the research question. According to Jovanović (2019:2), data collection is a "process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes." According to Jovanović (2019:2), a face-to-face interview is one of the most common types of data collection methods in qualitative research as it collects data and information directly from the interviews and is suitable when one needs to gather highly personalised information (Nieuwenhuis, 2013:178). In this study I interviewed 10 circuit managers in separate individual interviews, taperecorded the interviews and took field notes. I reviewed documents including books, theses, articles, newspapers, education policies, Grade 12 results and international reports on global education as part of the literature.

Research Sample

The participants' qualifications ranged from Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Education (BEd), Master of Education (MEd), Doctor of Education (DEd) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees (cf. Table 1).

Table 1 Circuit managers

Description	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	Total
Number	2	2	2	2	2	10
Age	38; 45	50; 55	35; 40	42; 60	45; 63	
Qualification	BA; MEd	BEd; MEd	PhD; BA	BEd; BA	DEd; BEd	
Experience as circuit	5; 8 years	10; 14 years	3; 7 years	9; 21 years	7; 26 years	
managers						

Participants were drawn from both performing and underperforming circuits of rural schools in the Limpopo province. The perception of more experienced and less experienced participants, and less qualified and highly qualified participants could serve as a basis for sound assessment of the quality of education at public schools. The circuit managers' ages and experience ranged from 38 to 63, and three to 26 years respectively.

Data Collection Instruments

Interviews, document analysis and observations were the primary data collection instruments. Triangulation of data was used to ensure validity and reliability of the data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

I adopted a thematic data analysis process, which is defined as a method followed in identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:101). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2009:475) define content analysis as

the process of summarising, verifying, analysing and reporting on the main content of written data and its messages. Content analysis was used to transform raw data into new knowledge. With the analysis I sought to construct and understand how circuit managers understand and perceive the provision of quality education in public schools. I collected data on circuit managers' roles and critically analysed the views of circuit managers on the provisioning of quality education in selected public schools in the Limpopo province.

Findings

Definition of Quality Education

Circuit managers were asked to define the concept of quality education. Some of their verbatim responses are presented hereafter.

Circuit manager A: Quality education is when a curriculum has been drawn taking into account that which a country needs. To produce future managers and leaders of this country. The country's needs must be matched with the output of the universities and colleges.

Circuit manager B: Enable learners to reach exit level, Grade 12 with the necessary skills to sit for tertiary education.

Circuit manager C: From my point of view, quality education is the one that yield results that are desired, prepare learners to get into the world of work, product to be promoted by the DoE.

Circuit managers perceived quality education differently in terms of acquisition of skills, provision of basic education and preparing learners for the world of work.

Provision of Free Education in Public Schools

I posed the following question: "The provision of free quality education for all is embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. How can you rank the implementation of this policy in public schools in the Limpopo Province?" Two of the participants responded as follows:

Circuit manager A: I can rank it as 'very low.' Too many stakeholders are causing delays in the implementation of this policy. Small schools in rural areas receive insufficient funds to cater for all the needs of the schools and parents were told that they should not pay school fees because government will provide all resources.

Circuit manager B: I can rank it as 'average.' Schools that perform better are those that charge school fees, have enough funds to hire additional educators. I can say free but not of good quality. All children have access to primary and secondary schooling but the quality of education is compromised. Matric learners from no fee schools cannot compete with those from well-funded schools.

It is evident that, according to circuit managers, the provision of free education is not at the expected high level in the Limpopo province, although there are signs of improvement in some areas of the province.

Access and Inclusivity to Quality Education

I also asked whether all public schools catered for learner diversity with regard to physical and cognitive diversity or for deaf and visually impaired learners. Most of the circuit managers responded that there was access in all public schools as parents could choose where to send their children for primary and secondary schooling. They referred to special schools that cater for learners with special educational needs and full-service schools that cater for learners with moderate barriers to learning. These schools are supported with additional human and physical resources to enable them to provide education for all learners. The circuit managers indicated that despite access, the quality of teaching and learning was still a challenge in most public schools.

Reading and Numerating Competencies in Public Primary Schools

In response to my questions of how they would rate the standard of reading and numerating in schools within their circuits, one of the circuit managers responded as follows:

Circuit manager B: I conduct reading audits on a quarterly basis when I visit primary schools. There are many learners who cannot read and numerate at expected grade levels. In one of the schools, in a Grade 7 class, I identified about 10 learners who could not read in their home language. In terms of mathematics, learners perform better than on languages but not in a satisfactory manner. The use of calculators at primary schools seems to be depriving learners' from opportunities to master mental arithmetic which was a norm in the past. I may conclude by saying that the standard of reading and numeration is of lower quality in our public schools.

It is evident that reading and numerating in public schools are far below the expected grade levels.

I asked a follow-up question: "How do you conduct reading and numerating audits to identify the challenges facing educators and learners in this regard?" The participants provided varying responses.

Circuit manager A: When I visit schools, I request for reading and numerating feedback from teachers and then sample children to read and test their mental mathematics in my presence.

Circuit manager B: When I visit schools, I request the principals to compile the reading audit for Grade 3 and 6 as exit grades in Foundation and Intermediate Phases.

Circuit manager C: I designed the reading audit templates for each grade and principals submit them quarterly to the circuit office of which I consolidate to have an overall picture for all the primary schools within our circuit.

The findings indicate that circuit managers perceive reading and numeration as a yardstick in measuring quality education. They use different monitoring tools and techniques to support schools in improving numerating and reading proficiency among learners.

Rating the Provision of Quality Education

When circuit managers were requested to rank the overall provision of quality education on a three-point scale, where 1 is below average, 2 average and 3 excellent, 50% of them rated "1" and "2" respectively. When rating, they substantiated their ratings by indicating the challenges in the provision of quality education.

Circuit manager A: Rated 1. We are trying to move to that level but we have a long way to go. We still have cases of poor performance in most [of] our schools, quality is not there at all. We can receive 100% pass rate in Grade 12 but no quality, very few Bachelor passes, only 10% out of that 100% receive Bachelor passes. CAPS [Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement] need more days for workshops so that educators can master the content. Discipline is also a problem in most secondary schools. Some educators are not dedicated and teaching is no longer a calling but job and is done only for money. Most principals

are doing both the governance and management of the schools alone.

Circuit manager B: Rated 2. Some public schools in our circuit are more advanced in the provision of quality education to the learners. We have schools that are counted among the top 10 best secondary schools in the province. The majority of our public schools are below average in terms of quality results. We are trying to do the twinning of schools so that they can learn good practices from each other.

It was evident that there was little improvement in the provision of quality education in the Limpopo province.

Discussion

Definition of Quality Education

I defined quality education based on international standards or criteria for the assessment of quality education. Circuit managers viewed quality education from a different perspective. Most circuit managers measured the quality of education by learners' academic performance and not by global standards. The circuit managers' responses could be supported by the existing literature. NEEDU (2015) is of the view that quality does not have common a definition. Mbazima (2018) concurs that quality is a difficult term to define. Tau and Mathebula (2008) argue that quality is easily defined informally and as soon as one tries to define it formally, vigorous and emotional debates arise. However, NPC (2012) is of the view that quality education focuses on the whole child. This is supported by South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 that describes the criteria for the provision of quality education as focusing on the development of the child in totality. Although circuit managers have different views on the concept of quality education, they all rated the provision of quality education in the Limpopo province as poor and that much improvement was required.

Provision of Free Education at All Public Schools The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996b) and policies such as National Education Policy Act and South African Schools Act have been developed to enable all South Africans to have access to free quality education. The research question was "What are circuit managers' views on quality education at selected public schools in the Limpopo province, South Africa?" It was evident that there was no equal distribution of resources in public schools in the Limpopo province. Historically disadvantaged areas lagged behind previously more advantaged areas. This is supported by Matomela (2006) who reports that in some cases learners still walk as far as 20 km to school and have to bring their own water. Renovation programmes are far behind schedule (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, RSA, 2006). The circuit managers' responses indicate that there is no equal

access to and distribution of resources to all schools. It is evident that high funding of public schools is directly related to the quality of education that learners may receive at public schools. Highly funded schools are able to mobilise teaching and learning resources including laboratory and media centre equipment that may assist in the provision of quality education to learners. The welfare of the learners with regard to transport, nutrition and access to learning support materials has a negative impact on the delivery of quality education at public schools.

Reading and Numerating Competencies in Public Primary Schools

It is evident that circuit managers perceived reading and numerating competencies to be part of the criteria for the provision of quality education. All participating circuit managers were of the view that learners' performance in mathematics and literacy were not adequate. Their views are supported by Africa Check (2014) which indicates that learners' performance standards in literacy and mathematics are extremely low and thus impacting on the dysfunctionality of most schools in the Limpopo province (Africa Check, 2014). Baatjes (2003) argues that the quality of education may be judged by the reading and numerating levels in specific grades. Baatjes (2003:1) further states that the most important element of high-quality education is literacy; without the ability to read, learners are denied pertinent information about health, social, cultural and political issues, as well as sources of pleasure and enrichment. Gunning (2007:3) reiterates that reading is important for learning as it provides learners with independent access to a vast world of information as well as fulfilment and enjoyment. The literature also confirms that the systemic evaluations tested a random sample of approximately 54,000 Grade 3 pupils in more than 2,000 primary schools in 2001 and 2007 (DoE, RSA, 2008b). The results of the 2007 evaluation show an average score of 36% for literacy and 35% for numeracy. In 2008 the DoE came to the conclusion that there was an "urgent need to improve performance in these critical foundation skills" (DoE, RSA, 2008b:12).

Rating the Provision of Quality Education on a Three-point Scale: Low, Average and High

The importance of quality of education is captured well in the NDP 2030 and it is the focus of the government programme of action. Mezieobi et al. (2008) argue that minimum standards for education can be measured against the NDP. South Africa has achieved the millennium development goals in education, but the quality of education is still a concern. It was against this background that I requested the circuit managers to rate the provision of quality education at public schools in the Limpopo province.

The circuit managers responded that "[t]he quality of education was still low in most public schools in the Limpopo Province." The circuit managers' conclusions are supported by Hopkins (2007) and UNESCO (2005) who perceive learning goals as a priority for the achievement of quality education. Circuit managers evaluated the provision of quality education and arrived at similar or closely related conclusions. Although perceiving quality education at different angles, most of the participants were not satisfied with the standard of education provided in public schools.

Conclusion

There is a need to develop strategic plans that may speed up the process of providing quality education to all South African citizens. This will only be possible when education stakeholders, including circuit managers, agree on common criteria for defining what quality education is. The provision of quality education at public schools leaves much to be desired. The improvement and/or removal of factors hampering the implementation of education policies developed after 1994 should be prioritised. The views of circuit managers on quality education has an effect on the manner in which they support schools in their realisation of the schools' visions and missions.

Recommendations

Based on the literature and findings from the interviews and document reviews, I offer the following recommendations.

- A common understanding of the criteria to measure quality education should be communicated to all education managers and other stakeholders and all resources should be channelled towards the achievement of educational goals both in the province and in South Africa.
- 2) Effective and consistent supervision and monitoring of the school system are required to confirm their level of compliance to quality assurance and to identify and eliminate poor quality or misfits. This exercise may reduce the number of the teaching and non-teaching staff who are not committed to duties, and not complying with the operational standards.
- 3) Continuous evaluation and analysis of the results as well as the output of the department in addressing community needs remain crucial if the functionality of the education system is to be maintained. The DoE needs to ensure periodic supervision, accreditation and reaccreditation of the school system.
- 4) The annual targets of the LDoE should be developed based on international criteria for the assessment of quality education. All circuit managers should set short, medium and long-term goals for the realisation of the vision and mission of the DoE.
- There should be equal distribution of educational resources to all public schools across all districts in the Limpopo province to enhance access to quality education.

Notes

- This article is based on my PhD thesis, "Managing the implementation of education policies for quality education in public schools of the Limpopo province."
- ii. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.
- DATES: Received: 9 October 2019; Revised: 8 April 2021; Accepted: 21 June 2021; Published: 31 May 2022.

References

- Africa Check 2014. Does the ANC have a 'good story to tell'? *Daily Maverick*, 25 April. Available at https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2014-04-25-africa-check-does-the-anc-have-a-good-story-to-tell/. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Baatjes I 2003. Reading in South Africa: An overview of policy, programmes and campaigns 1994.

 Innovations, 26:1–10. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ivor-Baatjes-2/publication/251175282_Reading_in_South_Afric a_an_overview_of_policy_programmes_and_camp aigns_since_1994/links/55253deb0cf201667be6a5 62/Reading-in-South-Africa-an-overview-of-policy-programmes-and-campaigns-since-1994.pdf. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Braun V & Clarke V 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2):77–101.
- Caldwell T & Obasi EM 2010. Academic performance in African American undergraduates: Effects of cultural mistrust, educational value, and achievement motivation. *Journal of Career Development*, 36(4):348–369. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845309349357
- Cohen L, Manion L & Morrison K 2009. *Research methods in education* (6th ed). London, England: Routledge.
- Department of Education, Republic of South Africa 2008a. Foundation for Learning Campaign: 2008-2011. *Government Gazette*, 513(30880), March 14.
- Department of Education, Republic of South Africa 2008b. *National reading strategy*. Pretoria: Author. Available at https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/DoE%20B ranches/GET/GET%20Schools/National_Reading.pdf?ver=2009-09-09-110716-507. Accessed 11 May 2021.
- Department of Education, Republic of South Africa 2011. National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades R-12 (CAPS) 2012-2014. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Republic of South Africa 2006. State of the Nation Address of the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki. Joint Sitting of Parliament, Cape Town, 3 February 2006. Available at http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/speeches/2006/mbek 0203.htm. Accessed 3 February 2006.
- Gunning TG 2007. Creating literacy instruction for all students (6th ed). New York, NY: Pearson Education.
- Hopkins D 2007. Every school a great school: Realising the potential of system leadership. New York, NY: Open University Press.

Jovanović V 2019. Adolescent life satisfaction: The role of negative life events and The Big Five personality traits. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 151:109548. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109548

- Kamens DH & Benavot A 2011. National, regional and international learning assessments: Trends among developing countries, 1960–2009. *Globalisation*, *Societies and Education*, 9(2):285–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2011.577337
- Kamens DH & McNeely CL 2010. Globalization and the growth of international educational testing and national assessment. *Comparative Education Review*, 54(1):5–25. https://doi.org/10.1086/648471
- Lewin KM 2007. Improving access, equity and transitions in education: Creating a research agenda (Research Monograph No 1). Brighton, England: Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE). Available at http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA1.pdf. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Mafuwane BM & Pitsoe VJ 2014. Circuit managers as agents of school development and support: A conceptual analysis. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(9):439–444. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n9p439
- Matomela M 2006. Eastern Cape Education provincial budget vote 2006/07. Available at https://www.gov.za/m-matomela-eastern-cape-education-prov-budget-vote-200607. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Mbazima N 2018. Quality education starts with schools that work. *City Press*, 12 April. Available at https://www.news24.com/citypress/voices/quality-education-starts-with-schools-that-work-20180412. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Mezieobi KA, Fubara VR & Mezieobi SA 2008. Social studies in Nigeria: Teaching methods, instructional materials and resources. Owerri, Nigeria: Acadapeak.
- Motshekga A 2015. Speech delivered at the announcement of the 2014 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations results by Mrs Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, Auckland Park.
- Namanya AM 2019. Teachers' understanding and classroom practices of quality education in Ugandan primary education. PhD thesis. Pretoria, South Africa: University of Pretoria. Available at https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/7 1739/Namanya_Teachers_2019.pdf?sequence=1&i sAllowed=y. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- National Education Evaluation & Development Unit 2015. *NEEDU national report 2014*. Pretoria, South Africa: Author.
- National Planning Commission 2012. National
 Development Plan 2030: Our future Make it
 work. Pretoria, South Africa: Author. Available at
 http://www.dac.gov.za/sites/default/files/NDP%20
 2030%20-%20Our%20future%20%20make%20it%20work_0.pdf. Accessed 31 May
 2022.
- Ndlovu SM 2017. The role of circuit managers in the professional development of principals. MEd dissertation. Pretoria, South Africa: University of

- Pretoria. Available at https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/6 5452/Ndlovu_Role_2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllo wed=y. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Nieuwenhuis J 2013. The role of critical readers in postgraduate studies. In JG Maree (ed). *Complete your thesis or dissertation successfully: Practical guidelines*. Pretoria, South Africa: Juta & Company, Ltd.
- Pigozzi MJ 2010. Implementing the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD): Achievements, open questions and strategies for the way forward. *International Review of Education*, 56:255–269. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-010-9163-y
- Press conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at United Nations Headquarters 2012. Available at https://www.un.org/press/en/2012/sgsm14518.doc. htm. Accessed 19 September 2012.
- Reddy V, Visser M, Winnaar L, Arends F, Juan A, Prinsloo C & Isdale K 2016. TIMSS 2015: Highlights of mathematics and science achievement of Grade 9 South African learners. Cape Town, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council. Available at http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-data/view/8456. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Republic of South Africa 1996a. Act No. 84, 1996: South African Schools Act, 1996. *Government Gazette*, 377(17579), November 15.
- Republic of South Africa 1996b. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996)*.

 Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Robertson T 2015. Leadership theory vs. leadership style. Available at http://smallbusiness.chron.com/leadership-theory-vs-leadership-style-32967.html. Accessed 25 October 2015.
- Sambo DJ 2011. The acceleration of quality education in rural schools through systemic curriculum management: A practitioner research perspective.

 M.Com dissertation. Durban, South Africa:
 University of Kwazulu-Natal. Available at https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/12413/S ambo_Dlelwane_John_2011.pdf?sequence=1&isAl lowed=y. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Senge PM 2006. The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. New York, NY: Crown Business.
- Shaked H & Schechter C 2017. Systems thinking among school middle leaders. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(4): 699–718. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215617949
- Sivakumar M & Sarvalingam A 2010. Human deprivation index: A measure of multidimensional poverty (Munich Personal RePEc Archive [MPRA] Paper No. 22337). Available at https://mpra.ub.unimuenchen.de/22337/1/MPRA_paper_22337.pdf. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Steyn GM 2008. Continuing professional development for teachers in South Africa and social learning systems: Conflicting conceptual frameworks of learning. *Koers*, 73(1):15–31. Available at http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/koers/v73n1/02.pdf. Accessed 31 May 2022.

- Tau M & Mathebula D 2008. Capacitating the state through the promotion of sound ethics and professionalism within the teaching profession. *Journal of Public Administration*, 43(3.1):349–359.
- Teu MC 2002. Internal quality assurance programme for public schools in North West Province. PhD thesis. Potchefstroom, South Africa: North West University. Available at http://repository.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/37287. Accessed 31 May 2022.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

- Organization 2005. *Decentralization in education: National policies and practices*. Paris, France: Author. Available at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00001412 21. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2007. *Education for all by 2015: Will we make it?* Paris, France: Author. Available at https://reliefweb.int/report/world/education-all-global-monitoring-report-2006-education-all-2015-will-we-make-it. Accessed 31 May 2022.