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Exploring the challenges of curriculum advisors in schools in the Vhembe-West district, Limpopo province, South Africa

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Monitoring and supporting teachers in the classroom, as well as the implementation of curriculum changes, pose problems in South Africa. This is due to an array of challenges such as a lack of resources, communication barriers within the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as well as a lack of proper infrastructure. In the research reported on here we investigated the challenges that curriculum advisors in the Vhembe-West district face and provides insight into some of their daily challenges. This could assist the international platform, especially as developing countries and other Third World Countries can benefit from the outcomes of this research. A qualitative research approach was used where 12 interviews were conducted with curriculum advisors in the Vhembe-West district. The interview questions were e-mailed to them beforehand so that they could familiarise themselves with the questions to be answered. Within a period of 2 weeks thereafter, interviews were conducted and recorded for analysis on Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The data were grouped and are presented in 5 different themes with the aim of highlighting the challenges as well as providing recommendations to deal with the challenges that curriculum advisors experience. The data reveal that curriculum advisors experience that they receive minimal support from their superiors and that the resources at their disposal also prove to be minimal. This study highlights the lack of resources, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of effective communication from management needed for proper curriculum implementation at schools.

Keywords: curriculum; curriculum advisors; infrastructure; management; monitoring; resources; schools

Introduction

During the apartheid era, the South African education system was divided into four education departments that offered different curricula along racial lines (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). At that stage, there were different curricula for Black, Coloured, Indian, and White learners. Since the democratic government took over in 1994, it restructured – among other things – the DBE (Mzangwa, 2019:11). This led to new challenges and with this research we aimed to determine whether specific challenges that curriculum advisors face are resolved in an appropriate manner and within a specific timeframe to add value to the schools they serve.

Background

South Africa currently has nine provincial departments of education and one national department of education (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996).

The reforming of the public schooling education system also meant that the pre-apartheid dispensation policies, which were racially divided and unequal, were replaced with a new approach, Outcome-Based Education (OBE). This failed and was amended and replaced by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and finally by the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Gumede & Biyase, 2016:69). In 2009, Umalusi, the education regulatory board, released a paper on whether the continuous assessment (CASS) method done at the end of each quarter to monitor progress in the classroom was worth keeping in the education system (Seshoka, 2016:21).

According to The South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), the education system in South Africa aims to provide uniformity, especially regarding the governance and funding of schools, which includes to:

- provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools;
- amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools; and
- support matters connected therewith.

To effect curriculum implementation and allow for easier monitoring of the implemented curriculum, the DBE established provincial, district and circuit offices. To enhance service delivery at schools, curriculum sections were introduced at district level (DBE, RSA, 2013). The various curriculum sections in the DBE deal with the development, support and monitoring of educators by appointing curriculum advisors to provide ongoing support (DBE, RSA, 2013). The responsibilities of these advisors are to train, implement, monitor and support educators in the development and implementation of curricula. This is accomplished by training educators quarterly in their clusters to prepare them for the quarter ahead. Educators are informed, by means of circulars, about the dates of the workshops and the content to be trained on.

The DBE proposes that the role of the curriculum advisors is to assist principals and teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning at schools (Smith, 2018:83). Usually, curriculum advisors work from

professional development centres, but, inevitably, they spend a great deal of time travelling to schools and training centres in their local areas (Bredeson, 2000:394).

Contextualisation

The Limpopo province can be described as a semi-rural and underdeveloped province (Seshoka, 2016:2). It is situated in the top northern region of South Africa. The Vhembe district is approximately 100 km north of Polokwane close to the Beitbridge border post. Vhembe consists of rural villages and semi-urban suburbs with 144 schools and 49 curriculum advisors. The schools mostly comprise farm schools with very few teachers. These schools are mainly situated in townships and villages where some schools have dilapidated buildings and are understaffed.

Curriculum advisors are employed officials of the DBE and their functions are to monitor and support the implementation of the curriculum in their relevant subjects at schools (DBE, RSA, 2013). They are qualified teachers and hold at least a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree or the equivalent thereof. The role of curriculum advisors in the optimal implementation and execution of an ever-changing curriculum cannot be over-emphasised (Rasebotsa, 2017:19). These specialists require various resources to perform their duties in an efficient and effective way (DBE, RSA, 2013).

Research Question

What are the challenges of curriculum advisors in schools in the Vhembe-West district, Limpopo province, South Africa?

Literature Review

The district office of the curriculum advisors assists in developing structures for curriculum implementation. They also need to work with school principals to create an environment that is conducive to the improvement of learner achievement and learning (DBE, RSA, 2013).

Like many government departments in South Africa, under-resourcing and mismanagement of state funds are far too common. A lack of infrastructure and resources is detrimental to the smooth running of schools (Beukes, 2016:3). Also, dilapidated classrooms add to the existing problem. A lack of resources has a ripple effect on the entire education system, and this is one of the biggest challenges that curriculum advisors face when monitoring and supporting schools (Rulwa-Mnatwana, 2014). The lack of resources may influence the quality of teaching and learning as well as the motivation of curriculum specialists to perform their best at times.

Curriculum advisors cannot be expected to conduct workshops with teachers or visit the

schools to assess the teachers' files and curriculum implementation when there are either no textbooks or outdated textbooks to work from (Tshiredo, 2013:21). Resources within the DBE are sometimes stretched to the limit and the appointment of new curriculum advisors is sometimes delayed (Rasebotsa, 2017:78). When monitoring and evaluating curriculum implementation the curriculum advisors assess the teachers' work, which includes the quality of cycle tests, examinations, and projects to see whether the required learner outcomes have been met and whether the teachers are implementing the curriculum correctly (Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller & Volmink, 2009). Therefore, the monitoring phase during the assessment of curriculum implementation is essential. Without regular monitoring of curriculum implementation and curriculum changes (which is external to the school administration itself), districts would only find out when students sit for their final exams in the fourth term that learning outcomes were not met. As a result, several students cannot move to the following grade (DBE, RSA, 2013). Monitoring and evaluating schools regarding curriculum implementation and curriculum changes help in providing a consolidated source of information showing the progress of the school (Miller, 2017). Cain and Du Plessis (2013) state that professional development can be useful if it is designed to be of longer duration. Longer-term professional development allows more time for teachers to learn about their practice, mainly if it includes follow-up training, focuses on subject-matter knowledge, and consists of a strong emphasis on analysis and reflection, rather than just demonstrating techniques.

Curriculum implementation assists with three important aspects of the education system, namely planning, accountability and performance.

Planning

The planning phase assists with setting annual targets and assessment plans, the implementation of the curriculum and programmes for when workshops are to be presented for teachers (Bonal & González, 2020:635).

During the prevalence of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), teaching time was lost due to the hard lockdown, which meant that the work lost had to be recovered during the next academic year (Bonal & González, 2020:635). The DBE implemented amended teaching plans with a revised curriculum where certain topics were shaved from the curriculum to allow for time to not only catch up on the work that was missed but also to cover the relevant work for the current academic year.

Accountability

This part of the planning phase allows for holding the relevant parties accountable, for example holding teachers accountable for completing and executing the curriculum programme in the desired manner (DBE, RSA, 2013). A level of accountability also applies to the curriculum advisors themselves in terms of ensuring that they, too, monitor the re-opening of schools, conduct school visits, and assist teachers by way of workshops and other material or assistance they may need from curriculum advisors (Mavuso, 2013:58).

Performance

This area of the monitoring phase allows for curriculum advisors to be effective in the implementation of the curriculum as well as in their responsibility to ensure that teachers follow the curriculum and have the necessary resources that are at the curriculum advisor's disposal (Tshiredo, 2013:40). Performance can be negatively affected if a lack of resources hinders the curriculum advisors to implement the current curriculum changes or present workshops for the teachers (Franklin & McLaren, 2015:152; Tshiredo, 2013:3).

Research Methodology

When considering the literature, a descriptive and exploratory qualitative research design was followed as it provides an accurate description of an individual, situation or social setting (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This was done within an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism involves writers from different intellectual backgrounds who are critical of the scientific model to study in the social world (Bryman, Bell, Hirschsohn, Dos Santos, Du Toit, Masenge, Van Aardt & Wagner, 2014:14). With this research we explored the challenges that curriculum advisors face at primary public schools in the Vhembe district, Limpopo province.

The study focused on the social-constructivist theory as the researchers wanted to obtain a deeper insight into the opinions of curriculum advisors and other significant role-players by means of conversation. A case study was used as research strategy as it takes multiple variables into account (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Furthermore, the design enabled us to obtain input from participants directly in verbal format.

As a point of departure, the interview questions were set and piloted to check the validity of the questions. The latter was then adjusted to include eight interview questions to determine the challenges that curriculum advisors face. These interview questions were sent to the curriculum advisors beforehand to familiarise them with the questions. Thereafter, the interview times to

conduct the interviews were scheduled with the curriculum advisors over a period of 2 weeks at a convenient time for all. Due to the risks and limitations of the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, depending on the most accessible virtual platform for the participants.

Validity of the study was ensured using triangulation where evidence from the sources was used to build a coherent justification of themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:200). Reliability was ensured as the transcripts were checked for obvious mistakes during the transcription phase and we cross-checked each other to ensure that the codes developed during the process of thematic analysis, were consistent (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:202).

Ethics

The ethics committee of the relevant institution approved the research (NWU-00864-20-A4). An letter of approval was obtained from the district granting permission to conduct the research. Throughout the study, all COVID-19 protocols relevant at the time were adhered to.

Sampling, Study Population and Criteria

Convenience sampling was used and participants willingly wanted to participate in the study (Du Plooy, 2009:123).

The population was 49 (*N*) curriculum advisors from the Vhembe-West district of which 12 (*N*) participated in this study to determine their points of view regarding the challenges in the district. All-inclusive sampling was based on the inclusion of curriculum advisors appointed between 2003 and 2019 who:

- had access to technology needed for the study;
- were willing to participate in semi-structured interviews that were recorded; and
- used English as the preferred mode of instruction.

Participants

Twelve curriculum advisors who were all qualified educators participated in the study. Five participants had fewer than 5 years' teaching experience, five curriculum advisors had 10 years or more work experience, and two of them had between 5 to 9 years' experience. It could be concluded that the participants had satisfactory teaching experience and that they also had experience in the operations of the district. The group included seven males and five females. This indicates a balanced representation regarding work experience and gender.

Data Analyses

The interviews were recorded and we made verbatim transcriptions in Microsoft Word while keeping the identity of the participants anonymous. The Word documents were then imported into Atlas Ti8 and coded where themes, categories and

sub-categories were identified (cf. Table 1). This type of analysis strongly indicated various similarities and differences across the transcripts and assisted us to identify the themes. This contributed to a deeper understanding of the

research question.

Findings and Discussion

The researchers compiled a table (Table 1) showing the five different themes, categories and sub-categories.

Table 1 The themes, categories and sub-categories that emanated from the semi-structured interviews

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
1) Subsidised vehicles	Long and tedious application process is a barrier for curriculum advisors Applications are sometimes lost in the system and must be started afresh, delaying access to transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum advisors must make use of their own vehicles because the applications are either rejected or not followed through Administrative problems with the transport department, where vehicle models change while applicants are still waiting for approval Applicants making use of own vehicles through scheme B but compensation for such is not enough to cover their transport costs Newly appointed (+ 2 years [yrs]) curriculum advisors have not yet been granted the opportunity to apply for cars Curriculum advisors complained that they submit applications and nothing materialises from these applications Indication that administration office of transport department does not run effectively
2) Insufficient operational resources	Resources are inadequate for the operational requirements Shortages impact negatively on curriculum advisors' ability to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum advisors do not have laptops, which they need to produce presentations for workshops Curriculum advisors only provided with a cell phone, which is not practical for attending and hosting virtual meetings as well as presenting workshops
3) Insufficient office space for curriculum advisors	Curriculum advisors are concerned about the poor infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum advisors acknowledge that they are not office-based, but require office space to conduct their administrative duties such as compiling month-end reports Those with subsidised vehicles need to compile reports regarding the kilometres they have travelled that month to meet the threshold Meetings are sometimes held between teachers and curriculum advisors at the circuit office, but there is nowhere to host these meeting
4) Insufficient communication	Issues with communicating important administrative matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum advisors complained of being notified at the 11th hour of workshops they are to host and meetings they should attend leaving them with no time to prepare
5) Ineffective management	Ineffective management might cause uncertainty among curriculum advisors Curriculum advisors do not have a body that can take their grievances to a higher authoritative level/department	Curriculum advisors do not know to whom they should report; there is confusion within the circuit on whether to report to the curriculum coordinator or the circuit manager Circuit manager at Vhembe-west not stepping up to tackle challenges experienced by curriculum advisors at district level

Theme 1: Subsidised Vehicles

Curriculum advisors need various resources, including transport, to perform their duties in an efficient and effective way (DBE, RSA, 2013). Every curriculum advisor interviewed had a problem with the way the subsidised vehicle programme operates and some of them stated as follows:

Participant 4: *We cannot do our job as we cannot reach the teachers.*

Participant 8: *I applied for a vehicle, but I do not know what happened to the forms and where it is in the process ... no one answers the phone....*

Curriculum advisors also indicated that applications for these subsidised vehicles are often lost and cannot be tracked. This then forces the curriculum advisors to start the application process afresh. This highlights maladministration on the part of the transport department that has the task of processing the said applications. The interviews revealed that curriculum advisors found the application process both long and tedious.

Participant 1: *It is terrible, you submit forms and then you will not hear anything, you will submit, again, and it will get lost.*

Participant 9: *You will wait and wait and wait....*

As a result, it hinders curriculum advisors' effectiveness in the scope of their duties. If they do not have access to transport they are unable to travel, and consequently, they cannot support the various schools allocated to them.

The lack of appropriate transport results in curriculum advisors being requested to make use of their personal vehicles while waiting for their applications to be approved. Research also indicates that some curriculum advisors make use of their own vehicles because of the long and often unsuccessful attempts to obtain a subsidised vehicle from the DBE (Seshoka, 2016:84).

Participant 4: *I used my own car, but it became too expensive....*

The cohort who had less than 5 years' experience, also indicated that they were yet to be granted the opportunity to apply for subsidised vehicles, which stresses the backlog in the application process.

Participant 7: *I am waiting to get an opportunity to apply for a car ... but I don't think it will happen soon....*

Participants indicated that their applications for a subsidised vehicle, had either never been successful or were not successful since 2014. The data collected also show that the curriculum advisors with more than 5 years' experience, had each applied for a subsidised vehicle on a minimum of three or more occasions. The general feeling seems to be that applying for a vehicle is a futile task or there will be countless requests from the department to provide the same supporting documents time and time again. Some of the curriculum advisors indicated that the model of vehicles they had applied for even changed while their applications were being processed.

The DBE provides curriculum advisors with subsidised vehicles to allow them to travel to the various schools in their districts. Seeing that curriculum advisors are not office-bound officials, they first and foremost need transportation to move from their operational base to the various schools in their allocated districts (Mazibuko, 2007:15).

During the interviews, these curriculum advisors highlighted that the compensation received for making use of their own vehicles was not enough to cover their running costs and maintenance (see Seshoka, 2016:84). This can lead to demotivation and schools on the outskirts of their relevant districts could be neglected. Participant 1 stated: *"The roads are difficult and there are many potholes ... I don't want to use my car as the department does not pay us to cover our costs."*

Theme 2: Insufficient Operational Resources

The curriculum advisors reported that operational resources such as laptops, data projectors and basic stationery requirements, to name a few, are scarce in the Vhembe-West district. The Curriculum advisors also stated that they needed data projectors, printers and scanners, as well as subject-specific equipment. Performance can be negatively affected because the lack of resources prevent them from implementing the current curriculum changes or presenting workshop for teachers (Franklin & McLaren, 2015:152; Tshiredo, 2013:3).

The participants indicated that the resources at the curriculum advisors' disposal were inadequate for their operational requirements, and as a result curriculum advisors were unable to conduct their duties effectively and efficiently.

Participant 4: *I want to do a good job, but it is difficult if you don't have stationery or support....*

Another challenge that was widely noted among curriculum advisors was that they had trouble conducting these workshops virtually due to a lack of laptops.

Participant 12: *With COVID, I don't have a laptop, I don't have data (sighs)....*

During the COVID-19 period this was a major problem and virtual communication became core in the process of service delivery. Owing to COVID-19 regulations and protocols, curriculum advisors were also tasked with hosting teacher training workshops virtually. To assist them in carrying out these tasks the curriculum advisors needed to be in possession of a serviceable laptop and internet access, which is a major challenge in rural areas. The curriculum advisors did, however, acknowledge that the DBE had made strides to try and assist them in this regard by providing them with cell phones on capped government contracts. However, they highlighted that these devices were not user-friendly when conducting virtual workshops and presentations. It was almost impossible to use cell phones to type up monthly

reports and keep record of the files of the teachers that they monitored.

Participant 4: *I have a cell phone, but it is difficult to connect. It is very, very difficult ... and sometimes we give up....*

The interviewees also confirmed that a lack of operational resources were a hindrance to effective curriculum implementation.

Participant 5: *It's difficult to do my job as I struggle with my cell phone and I don't have a laptop.*

Resource allocation remains one of the biggest problems that curriculum advisors had to deal with when monitoring and supporting schools, especially in the Vhembe-West district, as it was an impoverished rural area (Brynard & Netshikhophani, 2011:63).

Theme 3: Insufficient Office Space

Curriculum advisors are described as being “mobile” because their jobs require them to move around between the allocated schools to provide monitoring and support to teachers. Although this is the case, all the participants highlighted that there was a need for designated office space to accommodate curriculum advisors in the Vhembe-West district. The participants indicated that they had no space to host meetings with either teachers or principals. The participants also indicated that their job description required of them to provide curriculum coordination with an assessment report at the end of each month indicating what they had done and observed at the schools they had visited. The participants stressed the need for adequate office space to conduct all their administrative tasks as it cannot be expected of them to compile reports and review teacher files with no space to work (Seshoka, 2016).

When asked about to elaborated on the support they received from the DBE, one said:

Participant 4: *There is no suitable accommodation for the type of work I do; office space is limited.*

It is evident from the statement above that curriculum advisors are faced with a variety of challenges on a day-to-day basis. Participant 6 replied that curriculum delivery could improve if “*office accommodation and availability of subsidised vehicles were provided upon appointment.*”

Theme 4: Insufficient Communication

Communication is important in any organisation; a proper flow of information ensures that all different levels of the organisation run smoothly. The participants indicated that they were concerned about the lack of proper communication of information within the Vhembe-West district. The participants also indicated that poor communication hindered their effectiveness as it left them with no time to plan their schedules properly.

Participant 6: *We don't get communication or we get it too late....*

When asked about this situation, Participant 4 confirmed that “*we often compile reports, and they just sit on the circuit manager's desk without being processed.*”

The participants noted that they were almost always notified of important meetings and workshops at the last minute and were not granted any time to prepare for said meetings and workshops. They also noted that for these workshops they were sometimes required to be away from home for extended periods of time which required of them to arrange childcare and other personal matters in a short space of time.

Theme 5: Ineffective Management

Curriculum advisors work under a circuit manager who is meant to handle most of the administrative problems they encounter (Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014). However, the methods used when making these appointments mean that a district is sometimes stuck with an inefficient circuit manager who is not very helpful in handling the problems that the curriculum advisors encounter. Although they report to the circuit manager on administrative matters, their direct day-to-day reporting line is the curriculum coordinator. With this study we revealed that curriculum advisors in the Vhembe-West district were experiencing problems regarding their management and the obstacles that they experienced in executing their duties.

The interviews revealed that there was confusion in the Vhembe-West district about who the curriculum advisors were and to whom they had to report directly. The participants indicated that according to policy, they must report to the curriculum coordinator, who then reports to the circuit manager. The interviewed participants revealed that they often found themselves in a position where they were reporting the same information to both the curriculum coordinator and the circuit manager. One participant stated:

Participant 7: *It is confusing, we don't know whom to report to, you send the same information to all – sometimes it gets lost.*

This situation is confusing and causes a flow of miscommunication. Therefore, it is necessary to find ways to assist curriculum advisors in finding the necessary support when they encounter challenges.

This highlights two things: firstly, there is a lack of communication or understanding between the circuit manager and the curriculum coordinator; and secondly, proper procedures and protocols are not being adhered to in the Vhembe-West district. The implication is that issues are resolved at a slower pace because the correct channels are not being followed. The curriculum advisors also highlighted that once their grievances were brought

to the correct person's attention in the circuit, namely, the circuit manager, there is no resolution as the circuit manager often does not follow the escalation process by reporting these grievances to the district office when they are not resolved at the circuit level.

Furthermore, once the curriculum advisors have finished monitoring schools and have compiled reports, these reports are given to the relevant circuit managers who then have the responsibility of assessing the problems raised and assisting the schools and teachers to resolve these problems.

The curriculum advisors experience that a report will be handed to the circuit manager, who will sometimes make no effort to conduct follow-ups. This is problematic and a huge area of concern. There are also no repercussions when the educator has not done his or her job.

A similar problem arises when curriculum advisors write up reports on the school visits conducted and provide solutions to the teachers' problems, but on the next visit the same problems persist. Curriculum advisors often have no other method of recourse in these circumstances because they too have a heavy workload and most attempts at bringing these problems to the attention of their superiors are not successful.

The factors mentioned above hinder effective curriculum implementation and create an even heavier workload for the curriculum advisors. It also affects job satisfaction because they are faced with challenge after challenge, which does not seem to get resolved. There is little to no satisfaction when they do not see any progress in their work. Teachers sometimes do not support curriculum advisors and one stated:

Participant 2: You will go to a school and a teacher will go and hide in the bathroom until you are done looking at the other teachers' files.

Curriculum advisors also find it problematic that the school principals are not available to assist them during school visits due to other commitments.

Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that, like many government departments in South Africa, under-resourcing and mismanagement of state funds are far too common (Beukes, 2016:3). It is clear that being mobile is an inherent part of the job because advisors need to visit schools to assess curriculum implementation and offer support to teachers. This is, however, hindered by the lack of transportation facilities. The department should compensate curriculum advisors for making use of their private vehicles and they should revisit the application process for subsidised vehicles. The waiting time for both processes should be fast-tracked and once

all the requirements have been met, the process should not take more than 2 months. The DBE needs to improve or outsource its system as this is standing in the way of effective curriculum implementation.

To keep the curriculum on par, curriculum advisors need proper technological equipment to effect proper curriculum implementation. Curriculum advisors mentioned that they needed laptops, which are very important considering that following COVID-19 a great deal of work is conducted virtually. It is, therefore, recommended that a proper budget allocation is given to the district in order for them to get the necessary technology and stationery to perform their everyday duties. Once again, timing is crucial and if the department cannot provide the service, the function should rather be outsourced.

Another challenge was the need for office space from which curriculum advisors could execute their administrative duties. In this regard, it is recommended that the department should investigate the possibility of hiring additional offices in order to provide curriculum advisors with office space.

The interviews revealed that curriculum advisors in the Vhembe-West district were experiencing poor communication from those in charge of allocating tasks to them. The interviews furthermore revealed that important dates and information were not being communicated timeously. Therefore, general communication, dates of workshops and circulars, should be sent out in advance so that curriculum advisors are given time to familiarise themselves with any new information or changes that are set to take place. It is also recommended that a webpage be created for the district where important information is shared in real time. The management of such a site should be outsourced to technological experts.

Ongoing support, training and interaction between management and curriculum advisors are recommended. If communication on relevant issues improve, many misunderstandings regarding communication could be minimised. Teamwork will then also be enhanced.

It is also recommended that disadvantaged schools in rural areas should be supported by a specialised team in the province who understand the specific needs and frustrations of curriculum advisors, teachers and learners.

Limitations

Limitations of the research were that challenges have only been observed from the curriculum advisors' point of view. Since the advisors were only responsible for disadvantaged schools, the outcomes can, therefore, not be generalised across the various quintiles.

Conclusion

With this research we investigated the challenges that curriculum advisors in the Vhembe-West district faced and highlighted the areas that curriculum advisors felt hindered curriculum implementation. The challenges faced in this district emphasised that management at all levels should return to the basics. The challenges they face can be overcome by good management in particular and appropriate budget implementation. The requests made by the curriculum advisors are so basic that one cannot imagine the low morale that these educators must feel when trying to execute at least some of their tasks. It is so disappointing that with all the necessary democratic structures in place, educators still need to complain that there is a lack of basic resources, training and transportation for the cohort of educators who need to support teachers in rural and deep-rural areas.

Lastly, one cannot fail to observe research done in 2013 (Mouton, Louw & Strydom 2013), that a significant problem in the civil service is both a lack of transparency and accountability. Mouton et al. (2013) agree with the above statement in *Critical Challenges of the South African School System* that there is indeed a lack of accountability in the education system. Sadly, the situation has not changed much since 2013.

Authors' Contributions

Nelda Mouton wrote the article based on the study of Ms Malumbete that she supervised. All authors reviewed the final manuscript.

Notes

- i. This article is based on the mini-dissertation of Phamela Malumbete.
- ii. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.
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