



# Physical Education delivery in the intermediate schooling phase in South African public schools



## Authors:

Clinton D. Swanepoel<sup>1</sup>   
Charl J. Roux<sup>1</sup> 

## Affiliations:

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sport and Movement Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

## Corresponding author:

Clinton Swanepoel,  
cswanepoel@uj.ac.za

## Dates:

Received: 08 Mar. 2023

Accepted: 09 Oct. 2023

Published: 19 Jan. 2024

## How to cite this article:

Swanepoel, C.D. & Roux, C.J., 2024, 'Physical Education delivery in the intermediate schooling phase in South African public schools', *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 14(1), a1341. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v14i1.1341>

## Copyright:

© 2024. The Authors.  
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

**Background:** The use of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and delivery of Physical Education (PE) concerning time allocation, resources and number of learners per class is crucial for optimal delivery to the intermediate-phase (IP) learner.

**Aim:** This study aimed to determine the gap between the understanding and the interpretation of the content and requirements of the CAPS document, and the delivery of PE in the IP, in selected public schools in the Alberton region of Gauteng province, South Africa.

**Setting:** Alberton, a suburb of Johannesburg, was identified. This geographical area was divided into four segments. Two primary schools from each segment were purposefully selected according to the quintile levels.

**Methods:** A mixed method of data gathering was used. Questionnaires were administered and focus-group discussions (FGDs) were held. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were analysed using direct quotes and themes.

**Results:** The findings are in line with the results of the South African Universities Physical Education Association (SAUPEA) National Research Project in that teachers require further training on the interpretation of the CAPS document. Aspects of the CAPS document cannot be executed because of time allocation, class size, and a lack of resources and equipment.

**Conclusion:** To adhere to the expectations of the CAPS document, the use of available facilities, equipment, number of learners per class, and time allocation in PE need improvement.

**Contribution:** Enriching the PE curriculum through collaborating with stakeholders in local communities and governmental support.

**Keywords:** physical education; primary schools; life skills; intermediate phase; curriculum assessment policy statement.

## Introduction

In the South African context, physical education (PE) underwent significant changes since independence in 1994, after Apartheid, to bring equality into the educational system and curricular changes led to the relegation of PE (Van Deventer 2009a). With outcome-based education (OBE), life orientation (LO) and life skills (LS) were introduced as subjects in 1998 (Van Deventer 2009b). The OBE was revised and changed to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2000, and in 2002 it became known as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (Van Deventer 2009b), and was further replaced in 2012 by the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document. Currently, PE is offered as a subsection of LO and LS (Department of Basic Education [DBE] 2011b). While LO caters for the senior (Grades 7–9) and Further Education and Training (FET) (Grades 10–12) schooling phases, LS is for foundation (Grades 1–3) and intermediate schooling phases (Grades 4–6).

The understanding of content and implementation of the CAPS document in schools are crucial for the optimal delivery of PE. The CAPS document outlines the expectations of and standards for learners, as well as the assessment procedures that are to be implemented in the evaluation of their performance (DBE 2011c). The CAPS document is used as the policy-governing framework of the school curricula in South Africa under the NCS Grades R-12 (Stroebel 2018). The CAPS document states what should be taught in each grade (Nkosi 2014). It also indicates the learning activities, assessment procedures, and the time allocation for PE (Stroebel 2018).

## Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

According to the CAPS document, PE is seen as a subsection of LS and has the aim of promoting physical activity among children (DBE 2011d).

The gap between the CAPS document and its delivery within PE in schools can be attributed to several factors. A study conducted by Roux (2020) found that the lack of resources and inadequate facilities are major barriers to the effective delivery of PE in South African schools. This is in line with the findings of Almond and Casey (2013), which showed that insufficient funding for PE programmes and inadequate equipment and facilities could hinder the implementation of PE in schools.

Another factor contributing to the gap between the CAPS document and the delivery of PE is the lack of teacher training and professional development (Stroebele 2018). Many LO, LS and PE teachers in South African schools are not qualified and lack the necessary skills and knowledge to implement the CAPS document effectively, leading to shortfalls in its delivery (Roux 2020).

Moreover, the number of learners per class can also contribute to the gap between the CAPS document and the delivery of PE in schools. A high number of students in a PE class can negatively affect the quality of PE delivery, as teachers may be unable to give individual attention to each student, leading to a gap in PE implementation (Stroebele 2018).

There is a discrepancy between the current CAPS document for PE and the actual implementation of the curriculum in public schools in the intermediate phase in Gauteng, South Africa. This gap has resulted in a lack of adherence to the national PE standards outlined in the CAPS document and has impacted the quality of PE delivered in most South African schools (DBE 2011a).

The aim of this study was to determine the gap between the understanding and the interpretation of the content and the requirements of the CAPS document, and the delivery of PE in the intermediate phase (IP), in selected public schools in the Alberton region of Gauteng province, South Africa. This aim was translated into the following objectives:

- To examine the content and implementation of the current CAPS document in relation to PE in intermediate schools within the Alberton region of Gauteng province
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery of PE as outlined in the CAPS document in the selected public schools in the Alberton region
- To identify challenges or barriers in the delivery of PE in the intermediate schools of the Alberton region and how these may impact the effectiveness of the PE programme delivered in school.

## Research methods and design

### Study design

This study used a mixed method (Creswell & Plano-Clark 2011) descriptive design of data gathering. This was the same

design and data-collection method as the national study conducted by the South African Universities Physical Education Association (SAUPEA) (Burnett 2018). This research project (Burnett 2018) included public primary (Senior Phase) and secondary (Further Education and Training) schools and schools for learners with special needs from all nine provinces of South Africa. The methodology used in this study was developed and tested for face validity at a training workshop by SAUPEA (Burnett 2018) and was adopted for this study. Although the SAUPEA questionnaire was developed for the foundation phase, the questionnaire used in this study was adapted to collect information from learners in the IP.

This allowed for a diverse interpretation of how the PE programmes are delivered, understood and experienced. This mixed-method descriptive design with integrated methods and an interpretative approach was most relevant for revealing the acceptance expressed in local voices of programme content and teaching practices (Burnett 2016; Jabareen 2009).

### Setting

For this study, the research setting involved eight selected public, primary schools in Alberton. The researchers travelled to all the schools for data collection. The geographical setting of the research focused on a purposive randomised selection of eight public, primary schools in urban, township, and rural settings. Therefore, Alberton as a suburb of the Johannesburg metropole was divided into four segments (north, east, south, west). Two schools represented each of the segments ( $n = 8$ ). The schools were also evenly distributed from Quintile 1–5 (Van Wyk 2015). The National Norms and Standards for Public School Funding, according to the DoE (2009; Van Wyk 2015), proposed the quintile rating system, ranked from 1 to 5. Quintile 1 is the group of schools catering for the poorest 20% of learners. Quintile 2 caters for the schools with the next poorest 20% of schools and so on. At the other end of the scale, Quintile 5 schools are those schools that cater for the best resourced 20% of schools. Thus, two Quintile 1 schools, two Quintile 2, two Quintile 3, and two Quintile 4 or 5 schools were purposefully selected. Owing to the very similar socio-economic status of Quintile 4 and 5 schools, these schools were grouped together for this investigation.

### Study population and sampling

Some schools had qualified LS teachers who were responsible for teaching PE, and other schools had teachers only responsible for teaching the PE. The latter group included qualified and non-qualified PE teachers. Throughout this study, the authors will only refer to the PE teacher. The participants in this study therefore included all the PE teachers, which added up to 20 teachers and 50 Grade 6 learners in the IP from each school. As the Grade 6 learners were at the highest level of the IP, the study acknowledged that the Grade 6 learners would be more intelligible.

According to Burnett (2018), it was established that the Grade 6 learners found the questionnaires clear and easier to understand compared with Grade 4 and 5 learners of the same phase.

The categories of participants and the data-collection methods used were:

- A total of 374 learners responded to questionnaires
- A total of 48 learners participated in focus-group discussions (FGDs) (six learners were selected per school)
- A total of 20 intermediate phase PE teachers participated in FGDs.

## Data collection

The research started after ethical clearance (REC241112-035) and permission to conduct the research had been obtained. Data collection was performed by the researchers, who took responsibility for all questionnaires completed by the learners, as well as all interviews and FGDs. Logistical arrangements (setting up of the times and dates the research was conducted, explanations of research, handing out of consent and assent forms, handing out of interview and focus-group information letters, handing out of research approval letters from Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and the University of Johannesburg (UJ) research ethics committee and also getting approval from the principals to conduct the research at the relevant schools) were carried out by the relevant researchers at least 2 weeks before the site visit. After permission was granted and the assent (Grade 6 learners) and consent (parents or guardians) forms were signed and returned to the researcher, data were collected as follows:

Quantitative data were collected with the questionnaire (Burnett 2018) that was completed by Grade 6 learners. This was performed during an approved time, within school hours, given by the school principal. The learners had the opportunity to read the questionnaire and the researchers introduced the questions step by step. In the cases in which students struggled to understand, a teacher helped with language translation to ensure all questions were understandable. The learners returned completed questionnaires during the same session.

Qualitative data were gathered by means of FGDs. The FGDs were conducted in a secure and quiet classroom with all intermediate phase PE teachers per school. This was performed during periods in which the teachers had no lessons. A quota sample of three boys and three girls per school (participant representation) was identified by the learners as the most talkative ones from Grade 6, after completion of the questionnaire, to participate in a FGD. This was performed during breaks or, with the principal's permission, during class time.

## Data analysis

The quantitative data (questionnaires) were interpreted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

IBM version 24.0 (IBM Corp 2018). Descriptive statistics use percentages, means, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and cross tabulations to illustrate data. The statistics were performed with the support of Statistical Consultation Services (STATKON) at the University of Johannesburg.

Qualitative data (FGD) audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Key codes were assigned to identify words, phrases and comments, which were organised into categories of related patterns, connected ideas and linked concepts. Transcripts were repeatedly read to identify emerging themes. These themes were developed by means of Atlas.ti software (Friese 2014) and correlated with the objectives of the study, then compared with the existing literature (Vosloo 2014).

The qualitative and quantitative datasets were then triangulated to corroborate the findings.

## Ethical considerations

The following ethical guidelines were followed by the researcher:

- A research proposal for this study was submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Johannesburg.
- Ethical clearance was granted by the Higher Degrees and Research Ethics Committees of the University of Johannesburg ethical number: REC241112-035.
- Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Gauteng Department of Basic Education.
- All participants in the study participated voluntarily and could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.
- All participants had the right to equality, justice, human dignity and life, and protection against harm.
- The study fully disclosed the research aims, processes and its possible consequences.
- Objectivity was achieved and integrity was maintained by acknowledging the methodological constraints and determining the validity of findings.
- Written consent was requested for questionnaires, focus groups, audio recordings (the recorder was in clear view of the interviewee and all audio was destroyed after transcription).
- Confidentiality could not be ensured during focus-group interviews; however, the researcher ensured the data collected were always kept private, anonymous, and confidential.
- Child assent forms for all participating learners were requested.
- The researcher upheld the right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of research participants.

Ethical publishing practice was followed after permission was granted from the Department of Basic Education and the University of Johannesburg.

## Results

The results are divided into two sections. Section one displays the participating respondents and schools in table format to provide more contextual information regarding the participants and schools for clarity later in section two, when the findings obtained from the questionnaires and the FGDs are discussed.

### Section 1: Participating respondents and schools

Table 1 presents the number of learners per school taking part in FGDs. Six students participated in the focus groups: three male and three female. This resulted in a total of 48 participants: 24 male and 24 female, which participated in the study.

Table 2 illustrates how the schools and participants were coded for purposes of anonymity.

Table 3 displays the number of PE teachers per school and the demographic characteristics of the focus-group teachers. All PE teachers in the eight identified schools (A-H) participated in FGDs. This translated to 20 participants. For anonymity, the individual teachers per focus group are coded T1–T20 and the eight focus groups are coded FGT1–FGT8, according to the schools they were representing. Most of the participants ( $n = 16$ ) were female, while there were only four male participants. The

**TABLE 1:** Gender and number of participants in each school.

Gender	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total (N = 8)
Female	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	24
Male	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>48</b>

**TABLE 2:** Schools' and participants' keys.

School	Learner focus group	Teacher focus group	Individual teachers during focus-group discussions
A	LFG1	TFG1	T1 T2 T3
B	LFG2	TFG2	T4 T5 T6 T7
C	LFG3	TFG3	T8 T9
D	LFG4	TFG4	T10
E	LFG5	TFG5	T11
F	LFG6	TFG6	T12 T13 T14 T15
G	LFG7	TFG7	T16 T17 T18
H	LFG8	TFG8	T19 T20

Source: Adapted from Adewumi, T.M., 2012, 'An investigation into the implementation of the life orientation curriculum in selected fort Beaufort district high schools', Master's dissertation, University of Fort Hare, East London

ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 56 years. Regarding tertiary education, the majority of participants held a Bachelors in Education ( $n = 11$ ). Six participants held a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. There were two participants who were not qualified but were busy studying towards a Bachelors in Education. The remaining participant had no formal qualification. Regarding their experience in teaching, the teacher with the least experience had 1 year of teaching and the longest was 31 years.

### Section 2: Results of questionnaire and focus group discussions

#### Questionnaire of learners' views regarding Physical Education programmes

Table 4 explains learners' views regarding PE programmes and activities and portrays responses to five statements that were given on the questionnaires.

#### You were taught about Physical Education in theory without any practical activities

Responses to the statement showed 25.9% of learners who received PE lessons in theory without practical applications. School E and H had a higher percentage of 40.0% and 43.5% of learners answering 'Yes'. This is an indication that the CAPS document was not always followed by all the schools, as all PE lessons should include some sort of physical activity.

#### Other subjects (e.g. English and Mathematics) take the place of Physical Education

A total of 23.8% of the learners agreed with the statement. A high percentage of 62.5% of learners in school E and 46.5% of learners in schools G answered 'Yes'. The CAPS document indicates that PE is compulsory and should be taught once a week.

#### You had structured Physical Education lessons outside

In response to the statement, 76.2% of the participants agreed to the statement and 23.8% did not.

#### You played informally outside the class

A total of 66.3% of the learners said 'Yes' and 33.7% responded with 'No'. Physical Education according to the CAPS document should be a formal educational subject and not just playing.

#### You received homework

Responses to the statement: *The average percentage of learners receiving homework was 77.3%, compared with 22.7% who did not.* It is recommended that PE lessons should include homework to extend learning and to gain more experience, as well as to develop a link to the entry level of the following lessons hence to work from the *known* to the *unknown* (Yue & Chenyu 2022).

According to responses in Table 4 on the five statements regarding PE programmes, it became evident for the researchers that there was a possibility that the CAPS document



**TABLE 3:** Demographic characteristics of Physical Education teachers.

Teacher key	Teacher focus-group key	Number of teachers in focus group	School key	Gender	Age (years)	Tertiary teaching qualification	Teaching years
T1	TFG1	3	A	Female	26	Bachelor of Education	5
T2	-	-	-	Female	32	Bachelor of Education	11
T3	-	-	-	Male	30	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	6
T4	TFG2	4	B	Female	41	Bachelor of Education	20
T5	-	-	-	Female	28	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	4
T6	-	-	-	Male	56	Bachelor of Education	31
T7	-	-	-	Female	38	Bachelor of Education	15
T8	TFG3	2	C	Female	33	Bachelor of Education	10
T9	-	-	-	Female	36	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	9
T10	TFG4	1	D	Female	21	Busy studying towards Bachelors in Education	1
T11	TFG5	1	E	Female	20	No formal qualification	1
T12	TFG6	4	F	Male	40	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	17
T13	-	-	-	Female	24	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	2
T14	-	-	-	Female	36	Bachelors in Education	13
T15	-	-	-	Female	51	Bachelor of Education	22
T16	TFG7	3	G	Female	21	Bachelor of Education	2
T17	-	-	-	Male	32	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	9
T18	-	-	-	Female	40	Bachelor of Education	18
T19	TFG8	2	H	Female	44	Bachelor of Education	20
T20	-	-	-	Female	47	Bachelor of Education	17

**TABLE 4:** Learners' views on Physical Education programmes.

Statement	Response scores per school																Total	
	A		B		C		D		E		F		G		H		N = 8	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>You were taught about PE in theory without any practical activities</b>																		
Yes	18	37.5	4	8.0	2	4.0	15	31.9	16	40.0	5	10.0	17	39.5	20	43.5	97	25.9
No	30	62.5	46	92.0	48	96.0	32	68.1	24	60.0	45	90.0	26	60.5	26	56.5	277	74.1
<b>Other subjects (e.g., English, Maths, etc.) take the place of PE</b>																		
Yes	12	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	31.9	25	62.5	2	4.0	20	46.5	15	32.6	89	23.8
No	36	75.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	32	68.1	15	37.5	48	96.0	23	53.5	31	67.4	285	76.2
<b>You had structured PE lessons outside</b>																		
Yes	32	66.7	50	100.0	50	100.0	40	85.1	13	32.5	45	90.0	25	58.1	30	65.2	285	76.2
No	16	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	14.9	27	67.5	5	10.0	18	41.9	16	34.8	89	23.8
<b>You played informally outside the class</b>																		
Yes	45	93.8	12	24.0	19	38.0	45	95.7	31	77.5	25	50.0	29	67.4	42	91.3	248	66.3
No	3	6.2	38	76.0	31	62.0	2	4.3	9	22.5	25	50.0	14	32.6	4	8.7	126	33.7
<b>You received homework</b>																		
Yes	43	89.6	50	100.0	50	100.0	39	83.0	12	30.0	49	98.0	38	88.4	8	17.4	289	77.3
No	5	10.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	17.0	28	70.0	1	2.0	5	5	38	82.6	85	22.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>

PE, Physical Education.

was not fully understood and hence not fully utilised. This will be discussed throughout the following paragraphs.

### Focus group discussions of activities learners' engaged in during Physical Education

The findings in the questionnaires were supported by the learner focus-group discussion (LFG) seen below, as this theme concentrated on the activities the learners engaged in during PE. The learners indicated that they participated in different activities during PE; however, there was a clear indication that they felt they wanted to take part in a wider variety of activities.

This was expressed in the following views:

'We really enjoy PE and we also feel so happy when we go out and play.' (LFG2)

'I once could not take part in the exercises because it was too warm.' (LFG3)

'We want to do PE all the time but we only get to go once a week or sometimes even less.' (LFG4)

'Once we played pull the rope (tug of war) and this was really fun.' (LFG4)

'I wish we had swimming.' (LFG5)

'We need more group sports and not only soccer.' (LFG5)

'We really like not sitting behind our desk and going out to the field to play.' (LFG6)

'We sometimes do dances that make us feel really good.' (LFG7)

'We always do the same activities during PE.' (LFG8)

'Sometimes when we have PE we go to the fields and just sit on our own it feels like break.' (LFG8)

These findings showed that only two schools had some form of indigenous games as part of their PE programme, even though the CAPS document states, indigenous games should be included.

The learners made it clear that they had very little to no PE activities and that PE was used as an off period or seen as a break. These findings show activities are taking place, but they do not always link with the CAPS document.

### Questionnaire of learners' perspectives on challenges faced in Physical Education

Figure 1 illustrates the learners' perspectives on challenges regarding PE. Learners had to indicate to what extent certain experiences were relevant in terms of 'agree' or 'do not agree' to the given statements.

The theme was divided into nine statements: 'too much theory' was almost split in half with 48.1% agreeing and 51.9% disagreeing. The values for 'they are not good at physical activities' showed 55.6% agreeing and 44.4% disagreeing. Another high value in the statement, 'there is not enough variety in the activities' of 82.4%, was agreed upon. A total of 53.2% agreed that 'the assessment is not fair', while, in contrast, 46.8% did not agree. A very high number of 89.6% of learners agreed that 'the facilities were not in good order'. A total of 83.2% of the learners stated that 'the classes had too many learners'. The statement 'they cannot afford sport clothes' was highly agreed upon by 86.1% of the learners. A percentage of 88.2% of the respondents agreed that 'there is not enough equipment'. A total of 47.1% of the learners agreed that 'the teacher is not "good" (knowledgeable)' and 52.9% 'do not agree'.

The percentages displaying the challenges the learners' experience during PE are high. All these challenges play a role in the application of the CAPS document and delivery of PE.

### Questionnaire of learners' views on aspects to improve on in Physical Education

Figure 2 illustrates aspects to improve on in PE. Learners had to indicate whether they agreed, by choosing 'Yes', or felt that it did not need improvement, by choosing 'No'. The responses of the learners regarding 'the teaching should be better or more knowledgeable' showed that 62.6% said 'Yes' and 37.4% responded with 'No'.

The following statements all received a high value, with learners responding, 'Yes' to 'there should be more facilities' (80.2%), 'the facilities should be upgraded (improved)' (85.5%), 'there should be more equipment' (89%), and 'the equipment should be of a better quality' (90.4%). A total of 80.5% of the learners agreed that 'they wanted more practical lessons'. Furthermore, 68.4% of the respondents felt 'the class should be more organised', while 31.6% of the learners responded with a 'No'. A total of 73.8% of learners said 'Yes' to 'individual's skills should be measurable (better assessed)', while only 26.2% responded with a 'No'. A high percentage (83.2%) of learners felt 'the time given for PE was insufficient'. Finally, 90.4% of learners agreed 'they would want more lessons to take place outside the classroom'.

The high response to the aspects that require improvement is an indication that urgent attention is needed. All these aspects link with the CAPS document and its delivery. Should the impediments encountered within the PE context be successfully alleviated or resolved, a corresponding

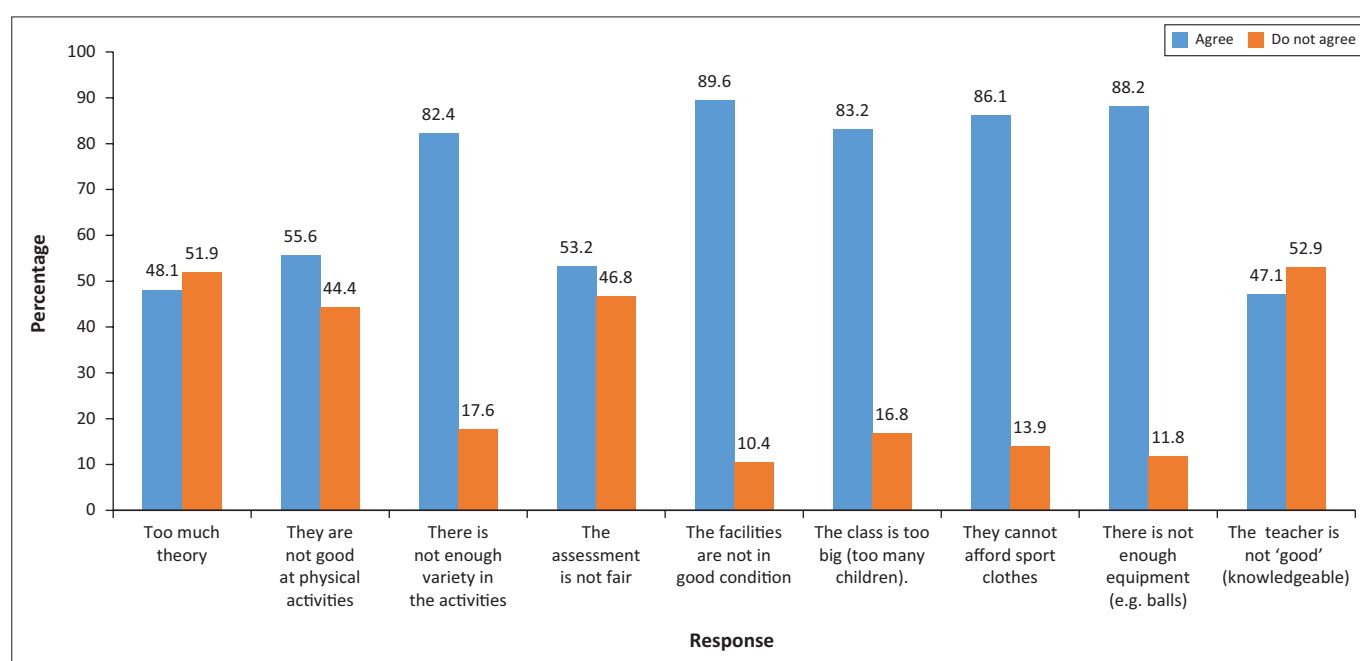
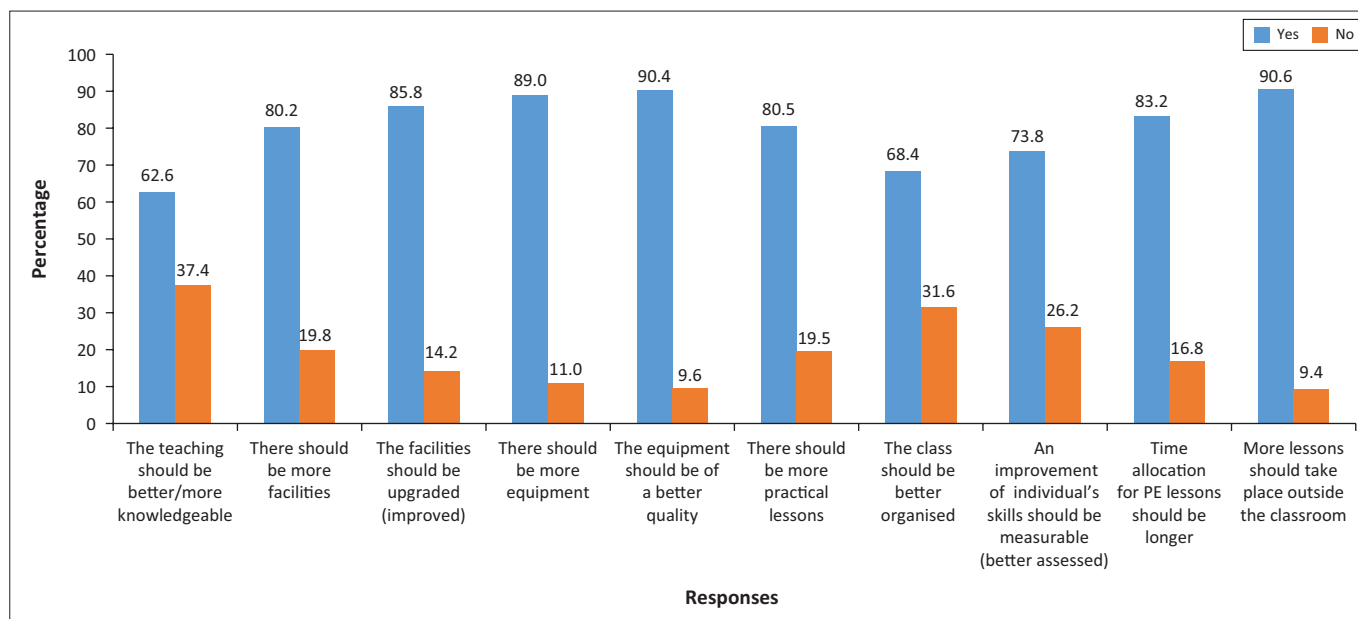


FIGURE 1: Learners' perspective on challenges regarding Physical Education.



**FIGURE 2:** The aspects to improve on from the learners' perspectives.

escalation in the utilisation of the CAPS document can be anticipated. This phenomenon is supported by the rationale that the improvement of challenges within the PE domain is likely to result in a heightened adherence to the CAPS framework, given that an improved PE necessitates a more rigorous application of educational policies and guidelines to facilitate effective teaching and learning practices.

#### **Focus group discussions of learners' views on the condition of Physical Education facilities and equipment**

These findings were supported by the theme related to the condition of PE facilities and equipment required for PE during LFG discussions. This was expressed in the following views:

'We do not have a big enough field to play on.' (LFG4)

'We are not allowed on the sport ground during PE because they only use it for competitions.' (LFG5)

'We do not have a PE playground, so we use a field next to the school.' (LFG8)

'We have all the equipment to play many games, but we don't always play these games.' (LFG2)

'We do not use the equipment we have during PE.' (LFG3)

'We received new balls to play with, but they were stolen.' (LFG7)

The FGDs with learners revealed a range of concerns regarding the conditions of PE facilities and equipment at their schools. One recurrent theme emphasised the inadequacy of available space for physical activities and restricted access to the sport ground during PE sessions. Surprisingly, despite having access to equipment by some schools, some learners expressed frustration over the infrequent utilisation of these resources and a lack of incorporation into PE activities. These insights underscore the critical need for a comprehensive evaluation of

our PE facilities and equipment management to better align with the learners' needs and aspirations and so align with the CAPS document.

#### **Focus group discussions of learners' views of number of learners in Physical Education classes**

The following theme describes the learners' views on the number of learners in the different PE classes. This was expressed in the following views:

'Sometimes the teacher cannot control all of us on the fields because we are too many.' (LFG5)

'Because some of the learners make too much noise and distract the class, they do not take part in the lessons.' (LFG8)

'We are too many in the classroom; we sometimes cheat to win the games we play, and the teacher doesn't even see.' (LFG1)

'We are enough in a classroom and the teacher always helps us.' (LFG3)

'I think we are fine.' (LFG7)

'Sometimes the teacher divides us into smaller groups, so we are fine.' (LFG2)

The key findings show a mixed form of learners' perspectives towards the number of learners per class. Small classes, particularly, resulted in learners not taking part in group activities. Large classes, in contrast, were poorly managed and maximum participation did not always happen during the lessons. The lack of supervision in the bigger classes showed low control levels of the learners. The bigger classes also showed shortages of space. The obstacle of effective implementation of the CAPS document is attributed to the substantial number of students per class, which places heightened demands on educators and resources. Managing a large number of student per class requires comprehensive planning and resource allocation, potentially leading to challenges in delivering CAPS-based education efficiently.

### Focus group discussions of learners' views on the assessment of Physical Education

The following theme relates to the learners' views and attitudes towards the different assessments performed during PE lessons. Positive and negative criticism was displayed. Challenges regarding earning marks were also clearly highlighted. This was expressed in the following views:

'The teacher watches us while doing the activities and if we do better, we get better grades.' (LFG4)

'It is not always fair as sometimes we cannot do what the learners who are good at sport do and we get a lower mark.' (LFG4)

'Sometimes I feel that I'm not part of the lesson as the athletic learners become too competitive.' (LFG6)

'We get marks for dances sometimes but if you cannot dance or if you are too shy to dance you get a lower mark.' (LFG8)

The FGDs with learners shed light on their perspectives regarding the assessment of PE. It is evident that a prevalent theme centres on the subjective nature of assessment, with students acknowledging that their performance during PE activities is observed by teachers, and level of performance is often rewarded with higher grades and not individual efforts. Concerns were raised about the fairness of this assessment approach, particularly for those who may not excel in sports or dance, as it may lead to lower grades. Moreover, some learners expressed feelings of exclusion when their more athletically inclined peers become overly competitive, potentially detracting from the inclusive nature of the lesson. These insights emphasise the need for a balanced and inclusive assessment framework in PE that considers various skill levels and fosters a supportive and equitable learning environment. These themes were supported by the teachers' views found in the TFG discussions.

### Teachers' views on resources such as facilities, equipment, time allocation, assessment and number of learners per class

The given themes highlight the teachers' perceptions of the state of PE with regard to resources, time allocation towards PE, assessment, and number of learners per class in the schools. The interviewed teachers bewailed the insufficiency and poor state of resources, such as facilities and equipment. The teachers also mentioned that time allocation was sufficient, and others pointed out that during some weeks no time was allocated for PE classes to take place.

Teachers' views on the resources, such as facilities and equipment, were expressed as follows:

'We had equipment, but it was stolen.' (TFG5)

'The equipment we have is very old and mostly broken.' (TFG8)

'The principal does not allow the learners on the playground unless we have a sport day.' (TFG5)

'Our equipment was never updated, and we are using what is left for the past 5 years.' (TFG7)

The responses by teachers refer to the terrible conditions that the schools found themselves in regarding facilities and equipment. The lack of facilities in these schools has put a big constraint on the delivery of PE classes.

Teachers' views on time allocation for Physical Education were:

'We do not have enough time for PE lessons as we have to do theory in some lessons.' (TFG1)

'We are only allowed to take part in PE and PA lesson every second week.' (TFG4)

'During the examination the PE lessons are used for studying and therefore the time of PE lessons are used for other subjects.' (TFG6)

'We only have 25 minutes per PE lesson per week. This is not enough time to have an entire lesson and make sure the learners gain the correct knowledge or skills development.' (TFG5)

The corresponding responses show that some teachers regarded PE time as being inadequate to engage in the required PE activities, although the CAPS document states a minimum of 60 min per week for the IP learners.

Teachers' views on assessments were expressed as follows:

'The CAPS document is used to decide how to assess the learners.' (TFG3)

'I observe my learners and give them a mark according to their performance. When I say performance, I do not mean I give more marks for athletic learners but rather specific to the individual learners and their ability to take part.' (TFG4)

'We do a lot of group work, and the learners assess one another on their contribution to the group work.' (TFG2)

'Sometimes we write tests on paper in class; for example on the rules of certain games and or sport to see if they listened in class.' (TFG6)

It is seen that no uniform method of assessment was used by all the teachers. The predominant method employed involved performance assessment through direct observation and evaluation. Self-made rubrics were used in some instances. Some indicated that they used the CAPS document rubric. There were no clear explanations on how formative or summative assessment was carried out in PE.

Teachers' views on the number of learners per class were expressed as follows:

'We have a policy at school not to over fill our classes. Our number of learners are good to keep control. We have enough space for all of them.' (TFG3)

'We have around 35-40 learners per class, and I manage them well.' (TFG1)

'Some of my classes are very small and playing group sport with them is very difficult.' (TFG5)

'I manage large classes, but space seems to be a problem for classes with more than 40 learners.' (TFG7)



'It's difficult to manage large classes at our school when we go to the field; we always lose control and I feel the support needed cannot fully be given to the learners.' (TFG8)

The data show varied responses from the teachers regarding class sizes. Teachers were capable of controlling the learners in classes. The teachers with smaller groups to teach said that it was easy to keep control but teaching them during group activities can be challenging. Teachers who said the classes had too many learners cited the lack of control, support, and space to do these physical activities.

### Teachers' views on the implementation of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement document for Physical Education lessons

The views on the use and implementation of the CAPS document by the teachers' focus-group (TFG) discussions are seen below. This was expressed in the following views:

'We do not use the CAPS document for PE; we rather focus on different sports at school.' (TFG6)

'It is our school's policy to follow the document as a guideline to teach the learners during PE.' (TFG2)

'We do not have enough time to follow the time allocated in the CAPS document for PE, but we do know about it and it is used for LS but not always for the implementation of PE.' (TFG7)

'The CAPS document is seen as a guideline, and we do not always follow it to the tee.' (TFG5)

'Unfortunately, our equipment does not allow us to follow all the guidelines of the CAPS.' (TFG8)

Based on the collected data, it is evident that educators possess awareness of the CAPS document pertaining PE; however, its constant implementation is not reliably observed. Teachers mostly follow the CAPS document for LS, but not for PE and the underlying activities.

The quantitative and qualitative data converged to provide a well-rounded view of the gap within the usage of the CAPS document in PE. Deficient activities, poorly maintained facilities and equipment and a lack of equipment, too many learners in class, and not enough time provided for PE are themes that emerged within the quantitative and qualitative findings. These observations and findings revealed that there is poor usage of the CAPS document.

## Discussion

The findings of the study show that PE in the selected schools faced challenges that are comparable to other settings in South Africa (Burnett 2018). The key findings of this study indicate that there is a gap within the use of the CAPS document for the delivery of PE in the intermediate phase. This is seen in that there are insufficient facilities, equipment and time given to PE. These challenges underscore the limitations in the effective utilisation of the CAPS document, as the findings suggest that the delivery of PE requires the presentation of these components at their

optimal levels. The ways the schools discuss their needs regarding PE and the way they address programme shortfalls and challenges are directly linked to tertiary training for teachers and the curriculum because teachers' training and the curriculum framework significantly influence their ability to understand, advocate for, and effectively address the specific needs and challenges related to PE in schools (Amusa & Toriola 2010; Roux, 2008, 2009, 2020; Shehu 2004).

The strength of the study lies in its connection to the national research study performed by SAUPEA under the guidance of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (Burnett 2018). This study focused on IP students who have not been included in the SAUPEA research. Globally, the importance of PE was highlighted when access to PE was declared as a human right in 1948 (the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Scholars such as Amusa and Toriola (2010), Roux (2020), Chin and Edginton (2014), Shehu (2014), and Burnett (2018) agree with this. However, the literature showed a need for exploration regarding PE in the IP. Thus, the basis of this study was to determine the gap between the understanding and the interpretation of the content and the requirements of the CAPS document, and the delivery of PE in the IP. Some recommendations that can be included are: to revise the CAPS document to clarify its content, reduce the number of adapted assessments, ensure a clear connection between theory and practice, adapt the CAPS document to schools with specific needs, such as low funding and inadequate facilities and equipment, and provide instructional training and adequate resources, including equipment to effectively engage learners in large classes.

## Conclusion

It is evident from this study that the implementation of the CAPS document is extremely important in the optimal delivery of PE. It is clear that there are shortcomings in various aspects such as teacher training, adequate facilities and equipment, time, and classroom size, that hinder the usage of the CAPS document. This study had the objective of examining the alignment between the interpretation and implementation of CAPS guidelines for PE with regard to time allocation, resource utilisation, and class size, and to identify associated challenges in selected public schools within the Alberton region of Gauteng province, South Africa. The results found that, although some schools with higher funding were capable of following the CAPS document, the implementation was lacking in most schools. The content was mainly created by the LS and or PE teachers without following the CAPS document.

Furthermore, this study set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery of PE as outlined in the CAPS document in the selected public schools of the Alberton region. Life Skills and or PE teachers are seen as the potential gatekeepers

to informing school physical activity policies, delivery, planning, implementation, and assessment of learners (Roux 2020). According to Spaul (2015), an education system is as good as the quality of its teachers. The CAPS document, which is seen as the framework of the curriculum, requires assessment in PE to be performed across the four terms in South African schools (Mqadi 2015). Assessment in the CAPS curriculum is mainly based on overall movement performance and frequency of attendance in PE programmes, without paying attention to the detailed mechanics of movement (DBE 2011b). Physical Education outcomes must be based on authentic, relevant, focused, and meaningful assessments (Dyson 2014). The results indicated that PE was not delivered effectively, as the activities were limited, time was insufficient, homework was not always given, and the learners did not always take part in educational physical activities.

Finally, the study had to identify barriers in the delivery of PE in the IP schooling phase of the Alberton region, and how these may impact the effectiveness of the PE programme. The lack of appropriate facilities, equipment, and time allocation towards PE, coupled with a constrained understanding of the subject, resulted in a reduction in the quality of PE and PE activities. It was clear that the participants enjoyed PE activities, especially the games, when they engaged with friends. However, they disclosed that they wanted more forms of PE activities. It is apparent that educators are cognizant of the CAPS document regarding PE, yet consistent implementation is not consistently observed and therefore suitable progression of PE programmes did not take place to achieve the desirable outcomes. The challenges faced resulted in a gap within PE and the use of the CAPS document as a framework for the curriculum. Therefore, the effective implementation of the CAPS document in PE requires improvement. This can be achieved by enriching the PE curriculum through collaborating with stakeholders such as in local communities (private businesses, knowledgeable people, coaches) and governmental support (DBE, district offices, subject advisors).

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge and thank the participants of the study for their support in sharing valuable information.

## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Authors' contributions

C.D.S. assisted with conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, writing – original draft and writing – review and editing. C.J.R. assisted with conceptualisation, methodology, writing – review and editing, and supervision.

## Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## Data availability

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author C.D.S on reasonable request.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency, or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings, and content.

## References

- Adewumi, T.M., 2012, 'An investigation into the implementation of the life orientation curriculum in selected fort Beaufort district high schools', Master's dissertation, University of Fort Hare, East London.
- Almond, L. & Casey, A., 2013, 'Factors influencing the implementation of physical education programs in schools: A systematic review', *Journal of Physical Education and Sport* 13(4), 643–647. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X11416734>
- Amusa, L.O. & Toriola, A.L., 2010, 'The changing phases of Physical Education and sport in Africa: Can a uniquely African model emerge?', *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance* 16(4), 666–680. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpherd.v16i4.56810>
- Burnett, C., 2016, 'Relevance of Olympism Education and sport-for-development programmes in South African schools', *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation* 38(3), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2076-3387/2016/v38i3a1267>
- Burnett, C., 2018, *National research: State and status of physical education in Public Schools of South Africa*, Research commissioned by UNICEF in partnership with the Department of Basic Education, Research conducted by South African University Physical Education Association (SAUPEA), University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg.
- Chin, M.K. & Edginton, C.R., 2014, 'Physical Education and health: Practices around the world', in M.K. Chin & C.R. Edginton (eds.), *Physical education n and health: Global perspectives and best practice*, pp. 1–12, Sagamore Publishing, Urbana.
- Creswell, J.W. & Plano-Clark, V.L., 2011, *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*, 2nd edn., Sage, London.
- Department of Education (DoE), 2002, *Revised National Curriculum Statement grades R–9 (schools) policy life orientation*, Department of Education, Pretoria.
- Department of Education (DoE), 2009, *The national minimum uniform norms and standards for school infrastructure*, Government Printer, Pretoria.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011a, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): Physical Education*, Government Printer, Pretoria.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011b, *Department of Basic Education National Curriculum Statement: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Life Skills Foundation Phase Grades R–3*, Government Printer, Pretoria.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011c, *Department of Basic Education National Curriculum Statement: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Life Skills Intermediate Phase Grades 4–6*, Government Printer, Pretoria.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011d, *Department of Basic Education National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12*, Government Printer, Pretoria.
- Dyson, B., 2014, 'Quality physical education: A commentary on effective Physical Education teaching', *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 85(2), 144–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2014.904155>
- Friese, S., 2014, *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS-ti*, Sage, London.
- International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), 2018, *IBM SPSS statistics for windows, version 25.0*, IBM Corp., Armonk, NY.
- Jabareen, Y., 2009, 'Building a conceptual framework: Philosophy, definitions and procedure', *International Institute for Qualitative Methodology* 8(4), 49–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800406>
- Mqadi, S.L., 2015, 'An exploration of the experiences of grade ten Life Orientation teachers towards the teaching of Physical Education in schools under Ugu District, KwaZulu-Natal', Master's dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

- Nkosi, T.P., 2014, 'Teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: A case study of three primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal Province', Master's dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.
- Roux, C.J., 2008, 'A Physical Education curriculum enriched with indigenous Zulu games for improved social development through cross-cultural interaction', *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* 6(2), 143–151. <https://doi.org/10.4314/indilinga.v6i2.26423>
- Roux, C.J., 2009, 'Integrating indigenous games and knowledge into Physical Education: Implications for education and training in South Africa', *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance* 15(4), 583–593. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpherd.v15i4.49545>
- Roux, K.C.J., 2020, 'The delivery of primary school physical education in South African public schools: The perceptions of educators', *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 10(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v10i1.813>
- Shehu, J., 2004, 'Sport for all in post-colony: Is there a place for indigenous games in Physical Education curriculum and research in Africa', *Africa Education Review* 1(1), 21–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146620408566267>
- Shehu, J., 2014, 'Post-2015 development agenda: Value proposition for Physical Education in Africa', *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance* 20(2:1), 593–605. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146620408566267>
- Spaull, N., 2015, 'Schooling in South Africa: How low-quality education becomes a poverty trap', *South African Child Gauge* 12(1), 34–41.
- Stroebe, L.C.E., 2018, 'Re-skilling of in-service teachers in Physical Education in South African schools', Doctoral thesis, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.
- United Nations (UN), 1948, *International Charter of Human Rights*, viewed 10 November 2022, <http://www.un.org/en/universa-declaration-human-rights/>.
- Van Deventer, K.J., 2009a, 'Life orientation in the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6): A survey in selected Western Cape primary schools, South Africa', *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance* 15(3), 459–475. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpherd.v15i3.46967>
- Van Deventer, K.J., 2009b, 'Perspectives of teachers on the implementation of Life Orientation in Grades R–11 from selected Western Cape schools', *South African Journal of Education* 29, 127–145. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpherd.v15i3.46967>
- Van Wyk, C., 2015, *An overview of education data in South Africa: An inventory approach*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 19/15, viewed 11 January 2023, from [www.econ.sun.ac.za/wpapers/2015/wp192015/wp-19-2015.pdf](http://www.econ.sun.ac.za/wpapers/2015/wp192015/wp-19-2015.pdf).
- Vosloo, J.J., 2014, 'A sport management programme for educator training in accordance with the diverse needs of South African schools', Doctoral thesis, North-West University, Potchefstroom.
- Yue, X. & Chenyu, J., 2022, 'A review of research on the potential value and realistic dilemma for homework in physical education', *International Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 2(1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.18122/ijpah.020132.boisestate>