

**CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN IMPROVING LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE: A
CASE IN UMHLATHUZE CIRCUIT**

BY

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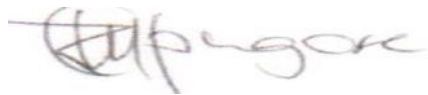
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DECLARATION

I, Zanele Carol Mpungose, declare that the theses entitled: *Curriculum Management in Improving Learners' Performance: A Case of uMhlathuze Circuit* is my own work, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. It has been submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Curriculum Studies) at the University of Zululand. It has not been submitted for any degree at any other university.



CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE:.....



SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE:.....

DATE: 31 MARCH 2023.....

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my one and only son, Siqiniseko Sicebi Mnyandu, for his support, encouragement and prayers throughout my time of research and writing. I especially thank my son for the precious time that I took from him while conducting this study.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and views of educators with regard to curriculum management for improving learners' performance in primary schools. The specific objectives of the study were: to explore how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit; to determine how curriculum management affects learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit; to investigate curriculum management challenges faced by educators in uMhlathuze Circuit; and to design a model for curriculum management that may be used to improve learner performance in primary schools.

The study employed a qualitative approach and case study design, and was conducted among Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) teachers, where levels of learner performance ranged from 0-29% (very poor) to 80-100% (outstanding performance). Data about educators' challenges was obtained through the use of unstructured interviews and document analysis. A sample of ten educators and five HoDs from five schools in the circuit were purposively selected.

The findings revealed that while these educators enjoy teaching and helping their learners improve performance, many challenges affect learner performance; amongst these are lack of teacher involvement in curriculum management. The study recommends that teachers be drawn into curriculum management processes, since teachers know a lot about learners and are well placed to manage the curriculum while bearing in mind the real needs of learners. It is likely that through involving teachers in the management of the curriculum, various other challenges would be minimised. Teachers are champions in the teaching and learning process, and understand the dynamics of learners' learning. They are therefore in an ideal position to contribute meaningfully to curriculum management.

Keywords: curriculum planning, curriculum management, learner performance, monitoring curriculum model, classroom management.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ ACCRONYMS

ABBREVIATIONS	FULL MEANING
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CBC	Competence-based curriculum
CMP	Curriculum management plan
DOBE	Department of Basic Education
ED	Educational development
GES	Ghana Education Services
GRN	Government of the Republic of Namibia
HoD	Head of department
IBE	International Bureau of Education
ICT	Information, communication and technology
INSET	In-service education and training
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LEA	Leadership academy
M & E	Monitoring and evaluation
MISD	Mansfield Independent School District
NCLB	No child left behind
NCS	National curriculum statements
PLC	Professional learning communities
PLTS	Personal, learning and thinking skill
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SANASE	South African National Association for Specialised Education
SAOU	Suid Afrikaanse Onderwyser Unie (South African Teachers' Union)
SMT	School management team
TISD	Texarkana Independent School District
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

According to Maringa (2016), to fully appreciate the dynamic role played by curriculum management stakeholders, educators really need to abandon the idea that curriculum is an object – explicit, prescribed and given. They might then find ways to understand and manage curricula in a positive manner that could improve learners' performance in schools.

Maringa (2016) identifies a common problem in teaching today, which is essentially one of how teachers see themselves. When teachers see themselves as merely technicians, whose realm includes lesson plans, curriculum guides, outcomes and tests, they may fail to realise the true nature of their calling. Teachers need to go further in understanding their role, and to value their own artistry, along with learners' curiosity, in order to enrich the curriculum and help learner derive real meaning from it.

To this end, teachers should be empowered with skills, abilities and access to resources in order to properly manage the curriculum and so improve learners' performance. Curriculum management is the ability of the school or teachers to manage systems, procedures, learners and resources to ensure that teaching and learning are effective and successful. This, in turn, will improve learner performance and achievement. Curriculum management needs to be done properly, as it has the potential to greatly improve learners' performance through enhancing teachers' professionalism.

Ideally, teachers would not view themselves as employees controlled by the educational system, but as co-creators of the curriculum, involved not only in implementing the curriculum but also in its design and management. In the following paragraphs, performance and competence models for schools are discussed and

critiqued, along with teachers' and principals' duties within schools.

According to Null (2011), curriculum is the heart of education, because it prescribes what is taught, combining thought, action and purpose. It is the duty of the school principal and teachers to ensure that curriculum is managed in a manner that improves learners' performance. Learners should be taught in a way that helps them think positively about their lives. School curriculum implementation involves taking a subject, preparing it for classroom use, and following through so that it makes a lasting positive impact on learners' knowledge, thinking abilities and attitudes. Teachers should know how to design and put a curriculum into practice in ways that effectively improve learners' performances in primary schools (McLachlan, Flear & Edwards, 2013).

Curriculum design individually and collaboratively defines what, *where*, *when* and *who* of learners' learning (Hale & Dunlap, 2010). The teacher critically thinks of ways to improve learners' performance through thorough planning, consultation and adoption of innovative best practice, in order to interpret and apply the curriculum accordingly. The school is responsible and accountable for executing the primary function of the education system, which is managing, teaching and learning. However, for the school to carry out this function effectively, the school principal and the teachers must fulfill their curricular role.

The success of curriculum management is realised through effective and productive teaching and learning. Beere and Boyle (2009) whose study was conducted in the [USA](#) argued that there are many spheres in which curriculum is revealed and used to benefit learners. They regard the competency-based curriculum proposed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) as a response to a need to develop skills or employability, collectively known as personal, learning and thinking skill. The American competency-based curriculum was planned in an effort to encourage learners to become self-managed, independent critical thinkers, problem solvers, effective participants, reflective learners and creative thinkers, able to work in teams. For successful learner performance, Americans use No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the name of an Act that supports disadvantaged children to attain academic success. The purpose of the NCLB was to make sure that the entire instructional process is

supported and monitored to close learners' achievement gaps by providing all learners with significant opportunities to obtain a high-quality education.

Curriculum management, if monitored properly, can assist learners to acquire a variety of skills in their roles, as mentioned above. McNeil (2006) posits that curriculum specialists at district, circuit and school levels are confronted with two dueling movements in curriculum management: the official curriculum, as presented by professional bodies, and government and legal agencies; and local-level teacher empowerment in enacting curriculum to enhance learning and the personal growth of students.

Local-level empowerment is an attempt to ensure that issues about what to teach are resolved as close to the school or classroom level as possible. It should take cognisance of learners' needs, and involve cooperation among staff at different levels of curriculum input. Through remaining close to the real-world scenario of teaching, curriculum management by teachers and heads of department can help improve learners' performance.

Corbett, Vibert, Green and Rowe (2016) state that improvisation is what all human beings do in their ordinary lives, minute by minute, day by day. Teachers should bear this in mind, knowing that their noble calling includes improving learners' performance on a daily basis. Curriculum management needs teachers with active minds, who can come up with new ideas on how to improve learners' performance. Teaching is complex and demanding work that requires highly specialised skills and knowledge to impact significantly on student learning (Department of Education and Training, 2005). Teachers need to be clear about their duties, and possess suitable skills to help improve learners' performance in primary schools.

An awareness of their calling also means that teachers need to be highly sensitive to the needs of learners in their formative years. Primary school learners are still fragile, young and not able to make good decisions and choices regarding their lives, and for this reason need teachers' expertise, support and guidance (Maimela, 2016). However, teachers and teaching itself cannot, on its own, provide everything that is needed for the sensitive shaping of young minds. For this, and to help learners improve their academic performance, school management teams (SMTs) need other

stakeholders or external agents and interest groups. Such agents could include nurses from the Department of Health to discuss health issues with learners, for example, or others from the community who might give input on the consequences of neglecting school and taking shortcuts in life. In this way, teachers are supported in the broader aims of teaching, which include the shaping of positive attitudes and healthy lifestyles.

On a daily basis, however, the instructional process of the curriculum at classroom level depends largely on teacher quality; according to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (2010) the quality of the teacher is the single most important factor for effective curriculum management and delivery.

Teachers need to make sure, first, that they understand the content of the curriculum and can interpret it for learners. The KZN Department of Education (2010) states that there are four core elements of the curriculum: teaching, learning, assessment and resources. These core elements are meant to be used together in order to improve learners' performance. The KZN Department of Education (2010) also lists four elements of curriculum management and implementation that guide the core elements strategy. They are: supervising the taught curriculum at classroom level, monitoring and evaluating curriculum implementation, providing support services and resources to teachers, and providing skills development training through in-service education and training for teachers (KZN Department of Education, 2010). All the above elements are aimed at equipping teachers with suitable curriculum information, resources, skills and development so that they may improve learners' performance in primary schools.

This study aims to investigate and prove the centrality of the role of teachers in effective curriculum management, and to show why teachers ought to have a voice whenever there is thinking or action on curriculum-related matters. The study explores the views of educators in this regard. The ultimate aim of the study is to help find ways to make teaching and learning more effective, and so improve learner performance in primary schools.

In South Africa, both rural and urban schools are faced with the problem of poor learners' performance. According to Kelly (2018), primary school learners

performance is declining rather than improving. The Department of Education at national, regional and district levels, along with teachers and school leaders, are therefore compelled to try various ways of overcoming this problem. It is disturbing to see the extent to which learners' performance differs from school to school and from learner to learner, even in schools falling within the same circuit, using the same curriculum. In some countries, teachers and school principals are regularly invited for curriculum workshops and training in order to have all members of the educational team working with the same goals and in a similar way (Opoku-Asare, 2016). The Texarkana Independent School District (2017) in the US posits that the purpose of the school system is to educate all learners to high levels through quality teaching and learning.

The Texarkana Independent School District (TISD) (2017) points out that improvements to teaching and learning depend on acknowledging and upholding the following principles: all learners are capable of striving towards excellence in learning; success influences self-concept, self-esteem, and behavior; instructional processes should be modified to improve learning; expectations of what learners should learn from each section of the curriculum should be clearly stated; teachers should have high expectations of all learners; there should be regular short- and long-term assessment of learners' achievement; and assessment results must be made known to learners and their parents.

Teachers generally enact their teaching decisions in line with some kind of explicit, more usually implicit, theory of teaching and learning (Bigg, 2006). The officials of curriculum management are responsible for work on the school curriculum, at what is often called 'the institutional level' (Walker, 2003).

In light of these statements, teachers should be involved in the management of the curriculum, since they are its implementers. They need to take decisions that will be in line with what they are expected to do when it comes to curriculum issues. Walker (2003) states that teachers manage the official procedures that create curriculum documents, which in turn direct the work of all the teachers in a school or system. Teachers must gain approval for these plans from the legally constituted local authorities. Teachers who implement the curriculum deal with curriculum matters

frequently and focally. The most important groups of curriculum practitioners are: teachers, who practise curriculum when they enact the classroom activities that bring a curriculum plan to life; school leaders, who share in curriculum decisions in schools and the institutions that govern schools; developers, who develop curriculum plans and material for teachers and learners to use; and influencers striving to bring about curriculum improvements from afar by influencing other practitioners. The commonsense way to improve curriculum is to get the interested parties to agree on what needs to be done, and do it. One way is to pick a curriculum improvement focus that has broad support and little opposition, and get all parties involved in shaping that area of focus.

One way to improve the curriculum is to appoint a school to develop curriculum plans and materials for targeted areas, working in close connection with the Department of Education. A lack of school involvement in the process can have seriously negative repercussions. For example, in Mozambique there was huge problem when it came to improving learners' performance as a result of a rapid increase in enrolments. This increase reflected the admission of large numbers of older learners who had formerly lacked access to educational opportunities (Government of Mozambique, 2005). It was difficult to improve the performance of these learners, and bring it to the level of learners who had long been in the school system. In this case, massive changes to the curriculum were called for at short notice. The issue of improving learners' performance through curriculum management is a challenge worldwide.

Curriculum management plays a vital role in the development of competent lifelong learners, irrespective of the changes that occur in South African education. Maimela (2015) posits that in South Africa, school management teams are faced with the responsibility of ensuring proper management of the curriculum so that learners' educational needs are catered for. Given the poor performance of the majority of South Africa's learners, there is still a lot to be done by South African curriculum managers to help learners improve their performance. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) state that it is essential that South Africa develop an education system that allows as many children as possible to go to school and seek an education of a high

enough quality to enable them to enter the labour market. Curriculum managers are responsible for designing curricula that can accommodate all learners, assisting them to meet the demands of the real world as they grow.

The following sections is a preliminary review of the literature on curriculum management, followed by a presentation of the theories that underpin this study.

1.2 Literature review

The issue of improving learners' performance in primary schools through curriculum management is a problem in all countries, with recent studies highlighting the problems in China, Congo, Nigeria, South Africa and others. Nzoko and Orodho (2014) indicate that school-based strategies employed by school managers to improve learners' academic performance reveal mixed results. Teaching methods influence learners' academic performance in all countries. Rowley and Cooper (2009), in *The National Curriculum Handbook*, attempted to identify ways in which schools could reflect and promote values by providing opportunities to learn and achieve. They suggested that teachers strive to make learning enjoyable, building on the strengths, interests and experiences of learners. Teachers should aim to promote enquiring minds and the capacity to think rationally and creatively. They should ensure that learning content contributes to learners' sense of identity through their understanding of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural heritages of diverse societies, in the local, national and global dimensions of their lives.

Flinders and Thornton (2013) argue that the curriculum is a central factor and can have catastrophic effects if it is incorrectly drawn up on a basis of guesswork and personal opinion. There should be clear structures and systems laid down to guide curriculum development, since it contains the content that will be delivered to learners. At the same time, the best curriculum in the world will not make a difference to learners' lives if it is incorrectly interpreted, broken down into sections and presented.

For a curriculum to improve learners' academic performance and lives, the content of the curriculum and its management and presentation needs to be more integrated

process involving, at least in part, teachers. The proper management and presentation of the curriculum is linked to school functionality. Walker (2003) states that curriculum improvement offers an opportunity to enhance the lives of many learners. Learners need not only good content, presented in increments that align with their levels of personal development, but also to be guided to discover their own abilities and interests. For this, they need teachers to expose them to a wide variety of tasks and approaches. Teachers should help learners identify what they are good at and like, commit to different values, pursue different careers and live different lives (Walker, 2003).

Rowley and Cooper (2009) conducted a study in England similar to that conducted by Flinders and Thornton (2013). Both studies covered the values that should be taught to learners, naming values such as self-confidence, competency and independence. Rowley and Cooper (2009) state that these values are inculcated both through educational content and through proper curriculum management. They place a high emphasis on values, yet observe that even where these values are deliberately taught, one still finds a high incidence of school drop-outs. Despite the best intentions of the school system and teachers, many learners simply cannot live by the values taught and become something other than what they were taught to be at school.

Rowley and Cooper's (2009) study specifically examined curriculum management problems experienced by teachers in Cumbria (England). At the time of the study, teachers in Cumbria were engaging in whole-school cross-curricular planning. They found that learner performance was poor and needed to be improved. They note that teachers were trying to find ways of improving learners' performance through curriculum management.

Rowley and Cooper (2009) argue that there are strategies for making links between subjects in the primary school curriculum in order to make it more integrated and relevant to learners. They explore the ways in which core values such as independent learning and continual growth may be embedded in the curriculum, not just through classroom organisation and ethos, but also at the very heart of subjects, in terms of content. The point they make is that the curriculum itself can and should cater for all spheres of education, developing learners academically and in

terms of life skills. A holistic view of curriculum can enable young people to live well, in socially adapted ways.

Schiro (2013) reveals that for almost a hundred years, educators have been at war with each other over what the primary school curriculum should look like. This war really revolves around different views on what will improve learners' academic performance and social values as future citizens. Visions of what a primary school curriculum should look like differ quite drastically, but all are based on one of four curriculum ideologies or philosophies; the *scholar as academic*, *social efficiency*, the *learner-centered approach*, and the *social reconstruction* ideology (Mäkinen, 2018). These are all, in essence, ideologies, and the underlying ideology of the curriculum can greatly influence teachers' day-to-day behaviour in the classroom. Curricula are underpinned by different views on the purpose of schooling, and different methods of achieving them. Mäkinen (2018) observes that the four visions of schooling have all played a part in stimulating improvements in American schools, and have also caused conflicts that have inhibited progress in the development of the school curriculum. All may be present to some degree or another in any one curriculum, and an awareness of their various emphases can contribute to positive school curriculum management.

In 2010, the Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie (SAOU) (2010), i.e., the South African Teachers Union, found that learners were performing poorly because in some schools the curriculum was not completed. This effectively meant that learners were examined without being taught all the work they needed to know. This raised questions about curriculum managers and how they perform their duties. Poor time management, which includes teacher absenteeism, sick leave, late coming and non-scheduled activities occurring during school time all contribute to poor curriculum management and hence to poor performance among learners. Learners' performance may also be affected by teachers' content knowledge of the subject, their curriculum and pedagogical knowledge, their classroom competence or the lack of it, the degree of learner support offered, the language of learning and teaching, and moderation.

In analysis of curriculum management, Nzoko and Orodho (2014) describe the

features of schools that can improve school effectiveness and learners' success. Such features include: commitment to success for all, flexibility and responsiveness, shared vision, a climate of challenging and stimulating teaching, and a strong and fair disciplinary climate. Even though some of these features may be present in the management of the curriculum in order to improve learners' performance, there is still a problem in many schools, particularly in curriculum management, because not all learners achieve acceptable performance. A great deal still needs to be done to improve learners' performance. Nzoko and Orodho (2014) suggest that the provision of social services at schools can contribute to learning by reducing absenteeism and inattention. This indicates that factors that are only indirectly linked to teaching and learning may affect the implementation of curriculum at school level.

Maringa (2016) posits that in South Africa, the education curriculum is influenced by the historical legacy of the regime in power before 1994. As early as the 1980s, it was found that principals and school management teams (SMTs) needed greater control of the curriculum so that effective teaching and learning could take place (SAOU, 2010). Currently, a lack of quality curriculum management in most schools leads to poor learner performance. Naturally, many changes have occurred in the content of the curriculum since the country's transfer to a democratically elected government (Maringa, 2016), but the problem of lack of teacher involvement in curriculum design and management continues to hamper schools. This is despite the fact that since 1994, there has been a massive restructuring of education to achieve equity (Quan-Baffour, 2006). However, in many cases, the quality of education offered has in fact dropped, and there is still a great need to take steps to improve learner performance in all schools, irrespective of race and geographical area.

Many challenges are faced by both rural and urban primary schools in South Africa and in other countries. Walker (2003) argues that teachers know that realising (or implementing) a curriculum in a classroom is not easy, especially when the curriculum is unfamiliar to them. It requires a great deal of skill. For teachers to successfully teach, they need to juggle several important goals. Walker (2003) mentions four crucial goals that teachers need to accomplish simultaneously:

- *coverage*, which is ensuring that certain topics, content or material are taught

to learners;

- *mastery*, which requires certain levels of achievement, demonstrating certain qualities of performance;
- *affect*, which are positive feelings and attitudes in the classroom, and order, based on maintaining good conduct in the classroom.
- *practitioner skill*, ie, teachers need to implement the curriculum in such a way that it brings the content to life.

Du Plessis (2014) concurs that there are difficulties in South African schools, particularly in rural areas. Rural areas are characterised by various factors that hinder the delivery of education, over and above poor management of the curriculum. Other factors contributing to learners' poor performance are lack of basic infrastructure such as water, roads, transport and electricity. These factors put many rural schools at a disadvantage.

Learners are not the same, and come from different backgrounds. In South Africa, poverty is one of many factors that contribute towards poor learner performance (Sithole, 2017). Poverty is found in both rural and urban areas, predominantly among black South Africans. Teachers should make the challenges of poverty easier to bear so that disadvantaged learners have some chance of achieving important educational goals. Some learners are slow in mastering their schoolwork; in such cases, teachers ought to have the time and interest in supporting them until they understand what they are taught. Unfortunately, spending any amount of time with weaker learners causes a delay in curriculum coverage, according to the time frame prescribed for each section of the curriculum. Teachers need to recognise signs of learning difficulties in learners' and strive to understand their problems. Signs indicative of lack of understanding include asking many questions, being puzzled, complaining a lot, avoiding participating, and others. These problems are noticed in both rural and urban schools.

Other challenges faced by primary school teachers, as stated by Koch (2018), are (1) non-participation of parents in teaching and learning matters. They do not want to be involved in their children's learning, yet parental involvement is critical for a learner's

social and emotional development and appropriate behaviour in school; (2) shortage of material supplied by the government; (3) many academic workshops for teachers held during school days, leading to teachers being absent from their classes; (4) some learners reject their lessons, having no enthusiasm for learning, owing to personal problems such as being bullied, domestic violence, sickness and others.

Walker (2003) posits that it is essential to maintain the quality of the school curriculum, even when nobody is complaining and no improvement projects are underway. However, this can be a struggle, given teacher workloads. It is very difficult for teachers to know where they stand with regard to their own performance when they receive no feedback from anyone on what they are doing. Schools generally lack a focus on feedback and positive reinforcement for teachers. Primary schools worldwide face similar problems, and share the same goal of managing the curriculum in order to improve learners' performance (Mfeka, 2016). Thus the issues outlined above are faced not only by South African schools.

School management teams (SMTs) in rural and semi-rural schools experience several challenges in curriculum management (Shoba, 2009). When the curriculum is well managed, the SMT will swiftly accept any change that has been introduced. This requires a team prepared to be flexible, and willing to change its mindset and its management approach in order to meet with the demands of the change. An SMT should also plan how best the curriculum can be implemented, since interpreting and implementing the curriculum at classroom level is always a challenge for the individual teacher, especially when there is a lack of SMT support. However, SMTs are generally not knowledgeable about specific methods of effective curriculum management.

These challenges are faced by all primary school curriculum managers. It can be stated that most schools struggle with curriculum management, and it needs to be attended to.

Williams, Driver, Feldman, Carranza and Casserly (2017) argue that the lack of a clear curriculum leaves teachers and administrators to individually determine what the district expects, and leads to a variety of interpretations that may or may not be

aligned with district expectations. The curriculum should be designed and managed in a way that encourages learners to attend schools with a positive goal in their minds, through the teachers' clear understanding of the curriculum. When encouraging learners to adopt positive goals for their learning, Mohanasundaram (2018) advises that teachers focus on what learners need, to help them improve their performance. This suggests that the focus should be not only on teaching per se, in the sense of conveying a curriculum, but on matching the teaching to learners' needs and abilities. In addition, learners need the full support of all educational stakeholders, which includes learners themselves, teachers, parents and circuit and district managers, in order for them to improve their performance.

There is a negative correlation between teachers' and learners' absence from classrooms and school results, according to Razafimbelo, Rajohnson, Ratompomalala and Malazamanana (2009), whose study was conducted in Madagascar. These scholars state that the issue of poor performance of learners in that country is caused by many factors, including absenteeism. A learner who regularly misses classes does not benefit from the same teaching time as others. In addition, learners who miss classes prevent the rest of the class from moving forward evenly. The issue of how to improve learners' performance in schools is raised by Khoza (2016), who states that before 2015, the emphasis was on enrolling as many learners as possible without due consideration for what the outcome would be when it came to curriculum management and learners' performance. The post-2015 emphasis is no longer simply to recruit as many learners as possible to schools, but to foster high-quality education that improves learners' overall performance.

In the past, it seems, teachers and principals considered it important to have a large number of learners in their schools, without considering the outcomes, which, in overcrowded schools, are frustration, despondency and discouragement among both teachers and learners (Muthusamy, 2015). Huge enrolments also have negative effects on curriculum management, especially if all systems in the school are not linked to teaching. It is clear that in many schools there is still a huge challenge caused by overcrowding. Khoza (2016) argues that improving learners' performance,

according to guidelines provided by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), is an important challenge to be attended to. In the United Nations system, effective school management makes use of a well-designed curriculum to drive all school processes. The focus in the current study is curriculum management, which should improve learners' performance regardless of the number of learners.

There have been many attempts to do away with curriculum management problems in order to boost learners' performance. The gap discovered by the researcher in this study was that learners' performance is still poor, irrespective of special measures taken. These include the Annual National Assessment (ANA), Jika iMfundo and others.

On 21 August 2015, the then Minister of Basic Education, Mrs A.M Motshekga, delivered a speech at the South African National Association for Specialised Education (SENASE) Conference at the Premier Hotel in Kempton Park, Gauteng. She stated that there were a number of challenges in the sector which still created barriers to the provision of quality education. Such challenges included inadequate school infrastructure, poor curriculum coverage and delivery, and inadequate retention, retrieval and usage of learner and teacher support material, amongst others. All these challenges widened the curriculum management gap and required attention. Both before and after that speech, many studies have been conducted on how to deal with South Africa's educational crisis.

A study conducted by Moir (2012) confirmed that there was a big gap in the management of the curriculum. Moir stated that academic staff were being pushed hard to deliver better quality teaching and research in the face of stiff international competition. This is a constant challenge for teachers; essentially, they are required to deliver quality education through a curriculum designed by office-based curriculum managers who have little idea of real classroom conditions.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2014) has stated that effective curriculum delivery is a principal indicator of quality basic education, and that teachers are the vehicles through which the curriculum is delivered. The issue is that teachers are

given documents to work with without consideration for how these documents are understood. Workshops are offered, but they are not sufficient to give the in-depth understanding of the curriculum that is required in order for teachers to deliver content meaningfully. Often workshop conductors themselves are not clear about the meaning of the curriculum or how it is to be applied in the classroom.

Furthermore, there is no uniform mechanism for subject teachers and subject specialists to participate in the continuous process of curriculum development, and for teachers to participate collaboratively in professional development. This includes discussion and dissemination of reports emanating from research, and examination of trends and best practices in the field of curriculum development to strengthen the implementation of the curriculum. There is almost no analysis of the state of various school subjects nationally, very little guidance on curriculum implementation, or a platform for unfinished debates in some subjects. What is needed is a platform for encouraging teachers to collaborate through professional learning communities (PLCs) to improve their effectiveness in the classroom, leading to improved learner performance (DBE, 2014, p. 4).

There is general agreement with the notion that curriculum management functions need to be a coordinated activity, and that a greater level of teacher involvement is needed when it comes to curriculum management. The literature clearly shows that there is a strong correlation between curriculum management and learner achievement in schools.

The following section discusses the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

1.3 Theoretical framework

This study is based on transactional theory, also known as management theory. Duemer (2013) states that transactional theory was first developed by Max Weber in 1947, and developed by Bernard Bass in 1981. It is characterised by the application of contingent rewards, active management by exception, and passive management by exception. Contingent rewards are described by Houlihan, Koestener, Joussemet, Nantel-Vivier and Lekes (2002) as the most complex, because they have the potential to communicate both competence and control. Passive management by

exception means not interfering until a problem becomes severe and demands action (Ghufran & Rizvi, 2018). Active management by exception means that the leader controls subordinates' activities to predict mistakes before they become a problem, and immediately takes corrective action when it is necessary (Mustafa, 2002).

In this study, transactional theory was employed, because it speaks to the reality that managers of the curriculum are in charge of how curriculum matters are attended to, and know when to reward and punish appropriately. Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube (2015) argue that transactional or management theory focuses on supervision, the organisation and group performance, and the exchanges that take place between leaders and followers. In this case, teachers are regarded as leaders and learners as followers. The teachers' job is to create structures that benefit learners, providing the necessary support and monitoring for learners throughout the learning process.

1.4 Problem statement

The responsibility for managing teaching and learning is shared amongst SMTs and educators (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2009). These responsibilities include setting the framework for effective teaching and learning, ensuring that curriculum delivery is being implemented successfully, and developing policies to address the issue of improving learners' performance. Curriculum management cannot be practised by one party at schools; it needs a combination of different individuals, each acting in accordance with the authority bestowed on them. The management of the curriculum is the responsibility of the SMTs, and should be geared toward the needs of learners. The curriculum should be managed in such a way that all learners can benefit from it and improve their academic performance. This is certainly the case in uMhlathuze Circuit, where learners in schools have shown poor performance for a number of years. Learner absenteeism, lack of interest, late coming and various societal issues hinder learners' performance in almost all primary schools in the circuit.

Several measures have been applied to improve learners' performance in primary schools, such as the Annual National Curriculum (ANA) statement. ANA results show

that there is still a lot to be done when it comes to curriculum management and the improvement of learners' performance. The ANA was introduced to improve learners' performance, but unfortunately was considered a failure. It was applied in both rural and urban schools, since performance is poor in both.

The key problem that the researcher discovered during the course of this research is that teachers are not involved in planning and designing the curriculum. They are considered only at the implementation stage, which leads to problems, since they are in effect teaching what is out of touch with classroom and learner realities. Malebye (1999) states that curriculum implementation does not start until the teacher interacts with learners. This is a late stage for teachers to enter into the picture. Teachers really ought to be given a voice in all curriculum matters at a far earlier stage.

This study tries to answer the following questions:

- How does curriculum management improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit?
- Can learner performance be affected by issues of curriculum management in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit?
- What challenges in curriculum management are experienced by the schools or educators in their quest to improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit?
- What model of curriculum management can be adopted and used to improve learner performance in primary schools?

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to explore the views of educators with regard to curriculum management for improving learners' performance in primary schools. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- to investigate how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit;

- to determine how curriculum management affects learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit.
- to investigate curriculum management challenges faced by school or educators in their quest to improve learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit.
- to propose a model of curriculum management that can be used to improve learner performance in primary schools.

1.6 Intended contribution to the body of knowledge

The results of this study will contribute to the understanding of curriculum managers and curriculum developers with regard to how the curriculum is managed in primary schools. Specifically, the study will:

- encourage curriculum planners and designers to revisit the matter of curriculum management. This will become necessary as planners and developers become more aware of how poor curriculum management contributes to poor learner performance;
- encourage schools to work together with the common goal of improving learner performance;
- give guidance to educators on how to manage the curriculum in their different subjects in order to assist learners to improve performance;
- encourage proper curriculum management by all in the school community to improve the entire school management, which turn will affect the academic performance of learners;
- help curriculum planners and support them in their hard work of improving learners' performance;
- give primary school teachers a deeper and broader understanding of the curriculum challenges they face, since they are the ones who are active in the teaching and learning processes.

1.7 Definition of operational terms

1.7.1 Curriculum management

Curriculum management is defined by Maringa (2016) as the management of subject matter, its creation, packaging and implementation. This concept means that curriculum should be managed to satisfy all aspects of teaching and learning in order to benefit learners. Proper curriculum management can improve learners' performance through encouraging learners to focus on their goals.

1.7.2 Learners' performance

Learners' performance refers to how well learners meets standards set by teachers, and the ability of learners to demonstrate knowledge by participating in classwork and homework, tests, presentations and discussions (Mamali, 2015). Learners' performance in this study is understood as being partially dependent on learner willingness to co-operate, pay attention to what they are being taught, and take full responsibility for their learning.

1.7.3 Curriculum planning

Murdock (2007) defines curriculum planning as planning involving a series of organisational methods for achieving optimal learner comprehension. A series of organisational methods should be applied to help learners achieve the goal of improving their performance. In this study, curriculum planning is done by curriculum planners who gather all the relevant information and engage with other stakeholders to improve learners' performance

1.7.4 Monitoring the curriculum model

Monitoring the curriculum model means gathering information for evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and ensuring that the intended, implemented and attained subject curricula are aligned (UNESCO-IBE, 2022). Monitoring the curriculum model in this study implies that the work done by teachers should be

monitored by their HoDs, and work done by learners should be monitored by their teachers. This is done with the express purpose of improving learners' performance.

1.7.5 Classroom management

Classroom management refers to any technique that teachers use to facilitate instruction and ensure that learners are learning in a conducive classroom environment (Jacobs, Gawe & Vakalisa, 2016). Classroom management practices will differ according to the subject, age group or teaching tools being used. Classroom management in this study refers to teachers' ability to provide and maintain a teaching and learning environment that encourages successful learning by all learners.

1.8 Research methodology

The research methodology of study refers to the specific procedures used to identify, select, process and analyse data about a particular title (Sileyew, 2019). It involves the following aspects: research design, the research paradigm, sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis.

1.8.1 Research paradigm

A qualitative approach was used in this study, underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm draws on a range of methods, tools and techniques to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Kivunja & Kuyin, 2017). The interpretivist paradigm was employed in this study because it allows researchers to view the world through the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

1.8.2 Research design

The research design is the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems to the pertinent empirical research (Williams, 2007). It articulates what data

is required, and what methods will be used to collect and analyse data. It also shows how all of these aspects will answer the researcher's questions. The research design should suit the purpose, the questions posed and the conceptual framework of the study. This study opted for the qualitative approach in the form of a case study design, and explanatory research was opted for because the study's aim is to identify causal links between the actors and variables that pertain to the research problem.

1.8.3 Sampling procedure

Sampling is the act of selecting a suitable sample from the population for the purpose of determining the parameters of the whole population (Bhat, 2020). The researcher used purposive sampling to draw conclusions about the population from the samples. A sample of only five schools was selected from the list of 79 primary schools under uMhlathuze Circuit, as this was considered sufficient to represent the primary school population of the area.

1.8.4 Data collection instruments

Unstructured interviews and document analysis were the data collection instruments used in this study. Interviews were unstructured because this method allows interviewees to speak freely in a situation resembling a normal dialogue, enabling the researcher to obtain in-depth responses. Document analysis was a suitable method as the documents needed were easily accessible and yielded a wealth of useful data. Document analysis helped the researcher in this study to determine the degree of alignment between curriculum management practices and learners' performance.

1.8.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of converting data into meaningful statements. Data analysis was performed immediately after the interviews were completed. Data was arranged and coded in order to make sense of units of information and help with the process of extracting meaning from the transcribed interviews. Themes and subthemes were formulated to properly present data from the participants. The researcher made use of comparisons between interview transcripts to extract the

main themes and sub-themes. In this regard, a checklist was useful, helping to ascertain how frequently common ideas were expressed by the various participants. Almost all data was assigned to a theme or sub-theme with details filled in from the various interviews.

1.9 Organisation of the thesis

This study is structured as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction and background

This chapter gives background information on the problem of poor learner performance in South Africa and globally, and establishes links between poor performance and curriculum management. The chapter presents the research problem, the aim and objective of the study, definitions of relevant terms, the contribution of the study to the body of knowledge, the main theory underpinning the study, and the research population, sample, design and methodology, in brief.

Chapter Two: Literature review and conceptual framework

In this chapter, the findings of other researchers are presented and discussed, along with the theoretical lens used to interpret the findings. Relevant concepts are defined.

Chapter Three: Research methodology and design

This chapter discusses the methodology applied in this study. A description of the qualitative approach, the case study design, the research paradigm, and the research instruments forms part of this chapter. Information about the research participants is also presented.

Chapter Four: Presentation and discussion of findings

In this chapter, the researcher presents and analyses the findings, which are discussed in relation to the findings of other researchers.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

In this chapter, the researcher summarises the findings, draws conclusions and

makes recommendations for education sector stakeholders and for researchers wishing to undertake further study in this area.

1.10 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the researcher has orientated the reader to the study topic, outlined the problem and clarified the purpose of the study. The rationale for the study was given, along with the study's contribution to the body of knowledge. The researcher has presented a list of four research questions, aligned to the research objectives. Operational definitions of terms have been given. The plan for the whole research study is also clearly outlined.

The following chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that underpins the study, and a review of related literature.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the introduction and orientation to the study, the significance, motivation and rationale, the problem statement and definitions of operational concepts. This chapter presents the theoretical framework which underpins the study, and a review of the relevant literature, guided by the objectives of the study. In reviewing the literature, the chapter provides general knowledge and an understanding of the curriculum management practices that improve learners' performance in primary schools. The literature is reviewed under the following subheadings: How curriculum management improves learners' performance in primary schools; challenges experienced by schools in curriculum management to improve learners' performance; departmental policies on curriculum management; and models that have been used to improve learners' performance through curriculum management.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The study is guided by the following two theories: *transactional theory* and *complexity theory*. Complexity theory helps explain the reward and punishment system used in schools and the complexity of curriculum management.

Maponya (2015) avers that the principal's instructional leadership role is directly linked to managing the instructional programme or curriculum of the school. Despite the complexity and volume of a principal's task, their main responsibility remains that of ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place in order to enhance learner achievements.

2.2.1 Transactional theory

Curriculum management is crucial for the improvement of learners' performance. If the curriculum is positively managed and implemented, it is likely that learners'

performance will improve. Ghuftron, Hardiyanto and Piyanto (2019) profess that it is difficult to optimise curriculum development if curriculum management is not extensively practised at school. If the curriculum is well managed, learners' performance will definitely improve (Towler, 2019).

This study is based on transactional theory, which is also known as management theory. Duemer (2017) states that transactional theory was first formulated by Max Weber in 1947, and developed by Bernard Bass in 1981. It is characterised by the following approaches: *contingent rewards*, *active management by exception*, and *passive management by exception*.

Contingent rewards are described by Houlfort, Koestener, Joussemet, Nantel-Vivier and Lekes (2002) as complex to understand and apply because they have the potential to communicate both competence and control. The principal and senior teachers should clarify the work required to obtain rewards and the use of incentives and contingent rewards to influence motivation (Thakur, 2014). In this way they establish the targets and outcomes to be achieved, helping the school to work towards improvement of learner performance. This implies that a school should have reliable measures in place for appreciating and supporting teachers, which will help foster a culture of teaching and learning. Contingent rewards are reward given for the quality of performance of an activity. When a learner did well the teacher gives them something in order to motivate them.

Active management by exception is the principle that the leader controls subordinates' activities by predicting mistakes before they become a problem, and immediately takes corrective action when it is necessary (Mustafa, 2002). In the school setting, the principal or teacher actively monitors the work of learners and takes immediate corrective actions when something goes wrong in the learning process. This demonstrates leading by example and promotes accountability and responsibility in monitoring of the curriculum.

Passive management by exception is the principle of not interfering until problems become severe and demand action (Ghufran & Rizvi, 2018). Passive management by exception is similar to *laissez-faire* leadership, that generally conveys an 'I do not care' attitude. The teacher or school leader using this principle recognises the basic

needs and wants of colleagues, and assigns roles according to the planned outcomes.

Transactional theory was deemed suited to the focus of this study as it is a management theory that explains the leadership role of the principal as an exemplar of instructional leadership. Transactional theory is aligned to the aim of this study as it takes the position that the purpose of leadership is to improve organisational efficiency and competence. Transactional leadership involves managing and helping organisations achieve their current objectives efficiently, by linking job performance to valued rewards and ensuring that employees have the resources needed to get the job done.

Amanchukwu, et al. (2015) argue that transactional or managerial theory focuses on the role of supervision, which must be provided by curriculum managers in schools, and the exchanges that take place between teachers and learners as leaders and followers. The teacher's job is to create structures that benefit learners, and to provide support and monitoring for learners throughout the learning process.

According to transactional theory, the principal first establishes the goal that the school intends to achieve. When explaining the goals to colleagues or subordinates, the leader would also mention rewards and punishments that are attached to certain behaviours in order to motivate teachers. Thakur (2014) avers that transactional leaders work with their team members who strive to obtain rewards for behaving in ways that promote the established goal. In effect, teachers exchange hard work for the promised rewards.

According to Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013), transactional theory is used by leaders to promote compliance among followers through a clear system of rewards and punishment. They note that transactional theory is effective in crises and emergency situations, where leaders take suitable actions as soon as they witness a problem. Leaders basing their style on this theory are concerned with correct processes rather than forward-thinking ideas. Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) expose five characteristics of leaders under transactional theory:

- The leadership is responsive, rather than proactive.

- It works within the organisational structure.
- Employees achieve objectives through rewards and punishments set by the leader.
- The leader motivates followers by appealing to their own self-interest.
- Passive by exception is practised, which maintains the status quo.
- There is an emphasis on correct actions to improve performance.

The above characteristics suggest that leaders who work according to this theory can promote quality teaching and learning through insisting on transparency and accountability. The curriculum implementation can be done in an orderly way, especially when the third characteristic listed above is implemented, i.e., when rewards and punishment are known and meted out as required. When employees are being rewarded for their good work and punished for their bad behavior – poor attendance and the like – they are more likely to make the necessary effort to change in order to be rewarded rather than punished (Sithole, 2017).

Leaders working according to this theory are those who prefer to operate within a defined system and follow its rules. Smith (2016) confirms that transactional leadership appeals to an individual's sense of self-interest, and is mainly an exchange process, focusing on control of behaviour. It has applicability in the school setting, since for the individual teacher to be competent, he or she must work towards established goals set by the Department of Education, the school governing body, the principal and the school management team.

Alig-Mielcarek (2003) confirms that transactional leaders do not emphasise change or reform. Instead they foster the status quo in schools. It is easy to discuss results of findings with these leaders because they are specific and get straight to the point. Performance and compliance with requirements is their main area of focus, rather than creativity or innovation.

Mensah (2016) states that transactional theory is based on a multidisciplinary perspective, including literary and social history, philosophy, aesthetics, linguistics, sociology, and anthropology. The theory is also driven by the intention to understand

readers' encounters with and responses to a wide range of literary and non-literary texts. El-Mereedi (2013) confirms that transactional theory shifts the focus of attention from the author and the text to the reader and the text. In this way, the theory is also said to be a reader-response theory, because the text does not possess a fixed or final meaning, which means that there is no definite correctness of a text.

In this study, transactional theory is employed because it aligns with the teaching and learning situation and the results sought in schools. Transactional leaders focus on the role of supervision, organisation and group performance. It is a leadership style that promotes compliance and the attainment of targets. Transactional leaders pay attention to followers' work in order to identify compliance, faults and deviations. This type of leadership is effective in crisis and emergency situations, as well as when projects need to be carried out in a specific fashion. If an individual does not perform their work to an acceptable stage, or worse, that person needs to be cautioned and reminded of the standard expected. In schools, teachers who do well should be appreciated and rewarded as this increases motivation. If a teacher does not do well, they need to be reminded of the goals and encouraged to work harder in future.

2.2.2 Complexity theory

Complexity theory may be traced back to the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico in the mid-1980s. It was developed by Doyné Farmer and Norman Packard (Berreby, 1996). Complexity theory focuses on complexity in organisations, emphasising uncertainty and non-linearity. It is appropriate for a study of curriculum management because curriculum management is complex and incorporates many aspects of a school. The curriculum is a complex phenomenon in the sense that it involves a number of components and stakeholders, some of whom contribute only indirectly. Complexity theory tries to expose how different elements of the system are linked to each other. For example, lack of leadership can affect management of the curriculum. In South Africa, stakeholders such as parents do not give much support to schools with the intention of enhancing learner performance. They are not to be blamed, since many interrelated factors affect parents' reluctance to get involved. Illiteracy and lack of time owing to work commitments are two reasons that hinder

parental participation in issues of the curriculum. Complexity theory recognises the interrelated factors that cause a component of a system to behave in the way it does. Complexity theory came into usage in the past 30 years (Davis & Sumara, 2019), although as early as 1970s, Jean Piaget proposed the notion of complexity theory for problems that transcend the boundaries of conventional academic disciplines. Other authors like Prigogine (1997) and Stewart and Cohen (1997) concur that complexity theory is relevant for understanding any phenomenon that might be described in terms of a living system. The theory is popular with many authors, not just the three mentioned above.

Complexity theory draws from research in the sciences, and originally was a theory of change, evolution and adaptation, often in the interests of survival and often through a combination of cooperation and competition (Morrison, 2006). The theory affords the opportunity for the reawakening of several educational topics which have been relatively silent in climates of high control of education.

Towler (2019) asserts that complexity theory has been applied in organisational settings to comprehend how effective organisations gain competitive advantage through leadership strategy and direction. The theory rejects linear causality and takes into consideration the whole system instead of just a part of it. It is characterised by four elements: agents with schemata, self-organising networks sustained by importing energy, coevolution to the edge of chaos; and system evolution based on recombination (Jess, Atencio & Carse, 2018).

In essence, complexity theory suggests that there is a movement towards bottom-up development and change. In education, it involves local and institutional decision making on educational matters, a reassertion of child-centredness, experiential, exploratory learning, a rejection of tight prescription and linear programming of teaching and learning, and a move towards non-linear learning and its curricular derivatives.

Moreover, it emphasises the process rather than the content of learning, as the constituents of relevant and enduring curriculum content are uncertain. Complexity theory can be confusing to some stakeholders, since it covers everything. An

application of the theory would suggest that curriculum content be unpacked in order for it to be clear to all stakeholders, including learners, parents, teachers, principals, circuits and districts.

The four elements of complexity theory are discussed below (Jess, Atencio & Carse, 2018).

Agents with schemata implies that stakeholders in curriculum management may ask for clarity regarding changes in the curriculum whenever they need to. *Self-organising networks sustained by importing energy* applies to principals and teachers who apply the rules stated by the Department of Basic Education on how to do particular tasks in schools. *Coevolution to the edge of chaos* means that the adaptation of a system to its environment emerges from the adaptive efforts of individual agents who attempt to improve their own payoffs. In this case, curriculum management should be practised in an environment that suits all the stakeholders. *System evolution based on recombination* allows local behaviour to generate global characteristics that alter the way education stakeholders interact. Everyone must feel comfortable in order to perform their duties in the expected manner.

Dodder and Dare (2000) add the following characteristics of complexity theory: a balance between order and anarchy; a network of many agents gathering information simultaneously; learning and acting in parallel in an environment produced by the interactions of these agents; the system co-evolves with its environment; order is emergent instead of predetermined, always unfolding and always in transition; it exists in many levels of organisation in the sense that agents at one level are the building blocks for agents at the next level; and by nature the future of the system is hard to predict. In total, the complex system of educational delivery should encourage all stakeholders to work in a way that will benefit learners.

The value of complexity theory is that it recognises the power of both learners and teachers in the teaching and learning process (Deogratias, 2018). Using this theory in a learning context, ideas from every individual are respected, and everyone retains an open mind in order to listen to each other and articulate ideas that will contribute to meaningful learning.

Morrison (2006) explores three challenges of complexity theory: First, the theory is itself complex. Many of the issues and concepts raised by complexity theory are not new, but the emphasis on the inter-relationship of constituent parts of a system is new. The second challenge, a corollary to the first, is simply that one has to ask whether complexity theory is not simply a statement of the obvious. The third challenge is the matter of how useful complexity theory actually is. It can describe and theorise what has occurred and what is occurring, but not what will occur in future.

Nonetheless, complexity theory is useful in this study, as it presents a detailed description of how systems and practices in an organisation work together and affect learners' performance. If any one component is not properly planned, implemented and evaluated, it will affect all other components. Learner performance in school is linked to the entire school system, especially curriculum management.

In many ways, transactional theory and complexity theory are aligned, and complement one another. Complexity theory stresses processes in teaching and learning while transactional theory focuses on helping a school to achieve its objectives efficiently through linking job performance to rewards and ensuring that teachers have the resources needed to get the job done. Both transactional and complexity theories in this study are useful in helping schools, where there needs to be a balance between efficiency and order, on the one hand, and a multi-directional flow of information and ideas, on the other. There needs to be a good balance between planning, supporting, developing, implementing and monitoring for the best possible outcomes for learners. Teacher as managers of the curriculum in the classroom should be fully committed and support learner to improve their performance.

2.3 The improvement of learners' performance through curriculum management

It is crucial that learners experience learning environments which support them to reach their full potential. In addition, learners are expected to show a positive attitude. Leepo (2015) suggests that increasing academic learning time is the key to

improving the performance and even the attitudes of learners. In contrast, Shoba (2009) asserts that learners' performance depends on the potential of an SMT and its members to be dynamic enough to perform their roles as curriculum leaders. The Mansfield Independent School District (MISD) (2019) maintains that teachers are to teach the curriculum in accordance with the curriculum management plan (CMP), which communicates the intention and direction of the curriculum, and instruction and assessment protocols. The CMP coordinates improvement efforts in the development and implementation of the curriculum, thus improving learners' performance.

Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012) asserts that learners' performance in schools is increasingly judged on the basis of effective learning outcomes, largely achieved through proper curriculum delivery, instruction and assessment. Sambo (2011) states that managing the school curriculum is about organising, leading and controlling teaching and learning processes so that learners gain the maximum benefit from the process. This implies that effective teaching and learning does not simply happen, but should be planned, managed and monitored.

It is important to work continually on curriculum management practices and sustain learners' performance. In addition, planning should be based on meeting the needs of staff and learners in order to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved (Mpungose, 2018). Nhlanzi (2018) posits that teachers should share in planning, all taking active roles in examining, evaluating and guiding the curriculum. The learner should change for the better during the learning process.

Staff need proper training and teaching materials, and regular access to academic and personal developmental workshops. Learners' needs are well-trained teachers, access to study materials and conducive learning spaces. When these needs are met, there is a chance that best outcomes in learning may be attained.

Although curriculum management by SMTs is seen as key to improving learners' performance, Sambo (2011) observes that in rural schools, there is ongoing poor performance resulting from SMTs' lack of capacity to plan well. There seems to be a

lack of commitment to the vision of their respective schools, and this contributes to poor learner performance. Likewise, in a study conducted in Scotland, Ozga (2003) highlights that in the United Kingdom, policy-makers came up with a new strategy in trying to reinforce curriculum management and learner performance. The strategy is called performance management, and is seen as a mechanism for putting pressure on the education system to force it to improve across the board. This implies that performance management is part of planning in the UK, where educators are assessed against certain performance standards in key areas. Performance management is a tool to monitor whether activities that have been planned for the organisation have been achieved, and identify areas that still need to be strengthened. It includes a personal development plan for every teacher (Mamali, 2015). However, Ozga (2003) avers that performance management failed as a strategy to serve its purpose, as most teachers needed more professional training to meet the standards set. In explaining the need for performance management as an essential part of curriculum planning, Ozga (2003) lists three critical aspects of performance management that must be present for it to positively affect the school. These are:

- the entire system needs to support the organisation's direction;
- performance management must have well-developed, efficiently administered tools; and
- streamlined processes are needed to make the system user-friendly and well received by organisational members.

All three factors confirm that performance management is still a viable option for improving school performance, and hence learners' performance.

Spaull (2013) contends that South African schools perform worse than those in other African countries such as Namibia, Ghana and Kenya. When one looks at policy innovations, the picture that emerges time and again is both dire and consistent, however one chooses to measure learners' performance. In short, in spite of all other educational developments, learners' performance is still poor and needs to be considered as central in all discussions on education.

It has been found that most learners perform poorly owing to poor curriculum management (Ozga, 2003). The poor performance of South African learners could also be improved through ensuring the adequate provision of resources, simplifying the language used in Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), and increasing support from the districts (Mopeli, 2017). Magagula (2015) concurs that several challenges need to be addressed urgently to improve the quality of teaching and learning in South African schools. Research in this areas confirms the view of the researcher that teachers need to be fully equipped with all the proper training and resources in order to meet the curriculum management needs for improving learners' performance.

Rammala (2009) points out that poor performance of learners is not just a South African problem, but an international one that has been linked to the impoverished socio-economic background of learners. This scholar defines poor performance by referring to scores below 50%, which was a benchmark for progression to other grades before 2008. In contrast, the benchmark for progression in South Africa is 50% for Home language, 50% for Mathematics and 40% for First additional language, according Jukes, Pretorius, Schaefer, Tjansik, Roper, Bisgard and Mabhena (2020). These benchmarks are especially prescribed for languages. The percentages are relevant to this study because all subjects are conducted through language.

Other prominent factors associated with poor learners' performance are: poor teaching methods, inadequate evaluation instruments, teachers' stress about their subject and the learning environment, and gaps between materials used for teaching and learners' needs (Alami, 2016,). Furthermore, Alami avers that both internal and external factors influence learners' academic performance, such as absenteeism, lateness and irregular school attendance. It can also be mentioned that there is a deeper context to poor performance in South Africa, especially with rural schooling, where poor performance may be linked to the socio-economic and political landscape. Filade, Bello, Uwaoma, Anwanane and Nwangburuka (2019, p. 82) draw attention to the more personal aspects of learners' poor performance, stating that it is also due to too much time spent on extracurricular activities and learner neglect of

academic priorities.

Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015) assert that in Malaysia, improvements in learners' performance relies on better use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education. This refers to the use of computer-based communication that is included in daily classroom instructional process. These authors also refer to the need to surround schools with dynamic and innovative learning environments for learners to become more motivated and creative.

The demand for improving learners' performances through ICT is largely about enabling learners to gain a wider range of knowledge and be able to use the internet to develop a global outlook; to nurture learners' abilities to process information more effectively and efficiently; and to equip learners with attitudes and capabilities for lifelong learning. Ghavifekr and Rosdy's (2015) findings reveal that the integration of ICT into the classroom needs serious consideration in order to increase the competence of the country's education system. In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education needs to change teachers' beliefs about the integration of ICT into the classroom. Such integration would make it easier for teachers to nurture learners by making use of information they acquire through using a computer. However, interventions are needed to assist schools and teachers to understand, use and manage technology better. Lack of familiarity with information technology was clearly a challenge to many teachers during the lockdowns resulting from the Covid pandemic. Globally, it took time to adjust and reorganise the curriculum. Badugela (2012) posits that if teachers are not well equipped, it is likely that they will face several challenges in their classrooms.

Learners' performance depends on a range of factors, including discipline (both at home and in the school), attitudes towards school, and the need for a positive school environment. These are discussed below. The researcher contends that the challenge of proper curriculum management needs urgent attention. The following section gives some context to the idea of curriculum management in schools, which is necessary for understanding how curriculum management can help improve learners' performance. Curriculum management needs to be considered in detail, in terms of how it works to improve learners' performance.

2.3.1 Contextualising curriculum management

School leaders should manage the curriculum effectively in order to help learners improve their academic performance. Curriculum management is a term commonly used to describe the leadership of the core functions of teaching and learning (Kyahurwa, 2013). Bishangirwa (2017) elaborates that traditionally, curriculum management aims at improving the quality of teachers' pedagogy and innovative strategies; currently, the particular focus is on improving the quality of teaching, learning and learners' achievement. Mohapi, Mogano, Mathipe, Matlabe and Mapotse (2014) argue that curriculum management is a critical aspect of teaching, ensuring effective teaching and learning. Principals are faced with the challenge of diagnosing the capacity of teachers and helping them to teach effectively, since teachers themselves are faced with the challenge of frequent educational changes which require them to adapt. Badugela (2012) laments that owing to the challenges experienced by educators such as inadequate resources, financial constraints and lack of training, curriculum implementation has proved to be problematic to the culture of teaching and learning.

Curriculum management embraces planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is also about managing systems, procedures and people to ensure successful learning and teaching, and to promote increasing levels of learner achievement (Maphalala, Khumalo, Buthelezi, Mabusela, Gamede Sibaya & Nzima, 2018). Khumalo (2014) and Mugabe (2013) emphasise that school discipline also contributes to positive curriculum management; discipline in the school and classroom imparts educative order, through which teachers help learners to reach appropriate standards and follow rules for engaging in valuable educational activities. Mafuwane (2011) adds that the school climate is another factor that contributes to curriculum management. He defines school climate as the social and educational atmosphere of a school. The elements that comprise a school's climate are extensive, and may include: the number and quality of interactions between adults and learners, learners' and teachers' perceptions of their school environment, discipline, academic performance and feelings of trust and respect between learners and teachers.

The issue of school climate is also raised by Thapa, Cohen, Gufey and Higgins-D'Alessandrou (2013), who state that the school climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life, and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices as well as organisational structures. Sithole (2017) avers that a positive school climate promotes respect and trust among learners, and encourages them to work together as a group. These qualities contribute to improving the environment for teaching and learning. Hence a sustained, positive school climate is associated with effective curriculum management, and it increases teacher retention.

In the South African context, there have been many curriculum changes that have resulted in constraining conditions for teaching and learning, according to the study conducted by Mohapi et al. (2014). Currently, the management of the curriculum in South Africa requires school principals who are well prepared and equipped to transform their schools and improve academic standards. In this regard, the improvement of academic performance will be difficult to achieve, as principals, like teachers, face a number of challenges. One is that their roles and responsibilities keep changing and increasing. Their roles are problematic, unclear and so demanding that many struggle to cope, particularly with the volume of administrative work (Kyahurwa, 2013, p, 88).

The findings of both Mohapi et al. (2014) and Kyahurwa (2013) confirm that in South African schools, principals are not yet well prepared for their ever-changing roles. They need proper training whenever there is a change in the curriculum in order to meet the demands of the curriculum at hand.

The discussion that follows covers international trends in curriculum management. The selected countries, United State of America, Malaysia and Tanzania, were selected based on interest, approach and instructional leadership. In the US, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is relevant to this study, as it focusses on instructional support and monitoring of learning, which can only be done in the context of proper curriculum management. The Malaysian national education blueprint of 2012 aimed to strengthen the primary school system by expanding the role of principals in curriculum management. In Tanzania, curriculum management is centralised, with

the curriculum having been subject to scrutiny and review many times in its history.

2.3.1.1 United States of America

The challenges faced by schools in the USA are not all the same as those of South African schools. In the USA, schools are faced with the challenges identified by Ayadin, Ozfidam and Carothers (2017). They are as follows: *demographic changes*: these include the public school population that is undergoing rapid and profound change. These demographic changes create the potential for serious disagreements about public education; *policy changes*: curriculum and instruction are influenced by changes in educational policies; and *emerging new technologies*: the development of educational technologies is changing people's beliefs about how learning occurs, resulting in increased pressure from the government.

It becomes clear from the above that in the USA, curriculum management issues and challenges are affected by demographic changes, policy changes, emerging technologies, globalisation and refugee and immigration issues. The demographic changes create the potential for serious disagreements about public education, and also offer the opportunity for the citizenry to strengthen its commitment to public education. It is therefore important that the changes in classroom demographics caused by an increasingly heterogeneous learner population in the USA be viewed by educators as both a challenge and an opportunity.

2.3.1.2 Malaysia

School principals in Malaysia are very competent in certain areas, and generally possess high-level management skills (Alias, Zainudin & Nasri, 2018). Their skills lie in monitoring and providing leadership in teaching and learning, since they guide teaching and learning processes. It can also be argued that an effective school curriculum is dependent upon leadership, which cascades actions to teachers, and on the appropriate use of multiple teaching and learning approaches. Principals in Malaysia are regarded as willing to spend considerable amounts of time trying to help, empower, train, inform and reward their staff. This is done to ensure the effectiveness of school curriculum activities and improve learners' performance (Shahadan & Oliver, 2016). However, although Malaysian principals are competent,

they need more training in order to develop their leading skills. The Malaysian curriculum places a great deal of emphasis on responsible citizenry, and strives to prepare learners to take leadership responsibilities in their communities. Principals as instructional leaders in that country are empowered to redefine their leadership role to influence learner's performance as responsible individuals who can adapt to the demands of life after schooling.

2.3.1.3 Tanzania

According to Bishangurwa (2017), the curriculum is not well managed in Tanzanian schools. Principals struggle to interpret and manage the curriculum and its implementation does little to improve learners' performance. The curriculum is centrally managed, with teachers and learners regarded as end users (Bishangurwa, 2017). Principals are faced with the challenge of lack of commitment and cooperation from teachers and learners, shortages of teaching and learning resources, and a high workload. According to Kasugi (2019), the Tanzanian primary school curriculum has changed many times, with different iterations emphasising civic and political education, cultural values, self-reliance and political/economic issues.

Furthermore, in 2014 and 2015, the Tanzanian Ministry of Education introduced the retooling project, which aimed to encourage teachers to use ICT in teaching Sciences and Mathematics. However, teachers were not equipped with the relevant resources for learners, since there was no internet coverage.

Khumalo (2014) states that in South African schools, the curriculum can be effectively managed by shifting away from traditional to innovative curriculum management. This implies that South African schools currently favour a traditional curriculum. In some respects the South African educational system may be considered to be doing better than the Tanzanian educational system, where, according to Khumalo (2014), some school principals run schools as their homes.

Many sub-Saharan countries experience challenges in curriculum management. Bishangurwa (2017) claims that in Tanzania, school teachers and learners' voices are neglected in curriculum management debates. Bishangurwa (2017) and Makunja (2016) state that teachers in Tanzania are constrained by:

- lack of time owing to work overload;
- teachers' resistance and lack of commitment to change and learning;
- lack of awareness of and orientation to the activities and significance of curriculum management,
- the inability of curriculum managers to appropriately apply the necessary procedures for classroom observation;
- lack of in-service training;
- insufficient teaching and learning resources;
- overcrowded classrooms,
- the low ability of learners' entering secondary school; and
- learners' lack of readiness to accept the learner-centred approach during teaching and learning, which compromises curriculum management.

Thus it would appear that the difficulties faced by Tanzanian schools in terms of managing their curriculum are similar to those of South African schools. Naturally these constraints have negative implications for learners' performance and the transfer of relevant skills. It has been found that in both Tanzania and South Africa, lack of in-service training, insufficient teaching and learning resources, overcrowded classrooms, the low ability of learners' entering secondary school, and learners' readiness to accept the learner-centred approach compromise curriculum management.

The various studies conducted in Tanzania also indicate that curriculum management issues and challenges are not constant; they present differently each year, and contribute to discomfort among teachers, school managers and leaders. Constant changes in the curriculum tend to drive teachers to teach what they want to teach, in the manner they are accustomed to. When a curriculum is considered too complex or too unstable, there is a temptation simply to ignore it. It also breeds cynicism, with

some teachers adopting the view that as long as they teach something, however out of touch with the curriculum, they will get paid, and that is what matters.

In South Africa, Mandukwini (2016) mentions the role of principals as a particular challenge in schools. Principals have two roles; providing instructional and curriculum leadership to teachers, and providing managerial and administrative leadership. Khumalo (2014) contends that South African principals are not well trained to support and manage their schools. Furthermore, Khumalo (2014) advocates for shifting the curriculum away from traditional practices and approaches to more innovative practices and approaches. According to this author, the work of principals in South Africa is not well documented. Principals are required to provide managerial and administrative leadership. They should focus on reviewing material and solving daily problems that teachers experience in implementing the curriculum.

The above brief review of educational systems in three countries highlights the similarities and differences in curriculum management among countries. An examination of what is done in other countries helps to shed light on South Africa's challenges, and may help in terms of adopting what has worked elsewhere. The countries were randomly picked

The basic principles of curriculum management are discussed in the following section.

2.3.2 Curriculum management principles

Most organisations and spheres of life have principles to guide them through their processes; for example, educational policies. Curriculum management is one of those spheres. Curriculum management principles are the values that a school believes will give both their learners and community the best chance of succeeding, and what they know to be right, given their context (Moore, 2017).

Curriculum management principles need to be agreed upon and articulated by all stakeholders before a school can begin to design its curriculum. When deciding on curriculum management principles, a school needs to consider what will give all its learners the best possible chance of becoming well-rounded, happy individuals who are prepared for the next steps in their lives. Oliver, Kersten, Vinkka-Puhakka,

Alpaskan and White (2008) state that curriculum management principles should influence the structure of the curriculum and the teaching methods adopted. In this case, the curriculum management principles are a set of guidelines for how the curriculum should be properly managed.

Vesely, Toenjes and McDougall (2018) posit that teachers are expected to have the flexibility to revise and adjust life lessons to address the needs of their learners. Vesely, et al. (2018) identify the following five management principles:

- Curriculum development is dynamic and includes processes for the management, development and delivery of the curriculum.
- Curriculum development reflects the best understanding of the growth and development of learners in a changing society.
- The needs of the community, research-based practices, a culturally relevant curriculum and state law must be taken into consideration. The curriculum should be based on set standards, and provide a framework for the development of a core set of non-negotiable and measurable learner objectives that are vertically and horizontally aligned.
- Curriculum documents need to be aligned and easily accessible.
- The success of the curriculum is assessed by formative and summative assessments at the district, school, classroom, and individual learner level.

A study conducted in Australia by UNESCO-IBE (2007) asserts that it is the task of Australian schools to foster the development of the talents and abilities of young persons in accordance with ethical, religious and social values and an appreciation of that which is true, good and beautiful. This is an example of a guiding principle for the curriculum and the management thereof. A further principle stated by UNESCO-IBE (20107) is that the content of the curriculum must impart an education corresponding to learners' respective stages of development and respective courses of study.

Rapporteur, Moorman and Rahm (2007) identify six curriculum management principles. The curriculum must:

- create a trusting environment and trusting relationships;
- provide self-directed and constructive learning opportunities;
- allow experiential learning and varied learning strategies;
- foster a community of learners;
- take a holistic approach to learners and learning; and
- create a Leadership Academy (LEA) culture.

These principles are in line with those of UNESCO-IBE (2017), in that they establish a set of philosophical and practical guidelines for the formation and management of the curriculum. These principles have strong commonalities; for instance, UNESCO-IBE (2017) mentions fostering the development of the talents and abilities of young persons, while Rapporteur, et al. (2007) speak of experiential learning and varied learning strategies. Both these points emphasise a diversity of approaches to suit the needs of a diversity of learners, so that all learners have a chance of performing to the best of their abilities, in a variety of areas.

Norwani, Yusof, Mansor and Daud (2016) list several principles that speak to the role of the teacher and the support that teachers need in managing and implementing the curriculum. They list these principles as:

- *Curriculum and instruction*, which refers to learners learning from the classroom teacher or instructional manager. Pedagogical content knowledge on the part of the teachers facilitates improvement in instruction and student learning, and should include subject expertise, instructional expertise and teaching-related skills.
- *Teacher leadership*, based on: leadership styles, leadership skills, inspiring actions, integrity, confidence and decisive entrepreneurship, along with creative and innovative, productive, risk-taking, opportunistic and optimistic decision making.

- *The administrative function*, which is about resource management, financial management, ICT management, and physical asset management. This includes the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement, ethics and policies, accountability, empowerment and vision.
- *Collaboration or sharing expertise and mentoring* are important principles for fostering a collaborative culture, sharing responsibility or expertise for learner success and educator development, mentoring, teamwork and openness.
- *The practice of professional learning for continuous improvement*. Teachers should access and use research to improve practice, learners' performance and capacity building.
- *Professional networking*: This is important for improving teacher performance, and involves outreach and collaboration with families, the community and social management.
- *Supreme or reference leaders* make personal contributions to the teaching profession and advocate for professionalism in teaching (Norwani et al., 2016, p. 377).

In the South African context, Adu and Ngibe (2014) stress that the National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-12 is grounded on the following principles:

- *Social transformation*: Ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population.
- *Active and critical learning*: This means encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths.
- *High knowledge and high skills*: Minimum standards of knowledge and skills should be identified for each grade, and high, achievable standards should be set in all subjects.
- *Progression*: This is an important principle for the content of each grades'

syllabus. There should be steady, incremental increases in content and complexity thereof for each grade.

- *Human rights, inclusivity*: This principle includes environmental and social justice, principles which ought to be infused into education, since social and environmental justice and human rights are central to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.
- *Valuing indigenous knowledge systems*: This means acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution.
- *Credibility, quality and efficiency*: An education system that values these qualities will provide an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to that of other countries.

Teachers should be prepared to engage in learning on their own, and identify their own strengths and weaknesses in light of the above curriculum management principles. These principles should be kept uppermost in the minds of school leaders, as they help shape the kind of education that is sought in South African schools. A familiarity with these principles will also inspire teachers and boost their appetite for teaching, to manage the curriculum in such a way that improves learners' performance.

2.3.3 Quality curriculum implementation

Curriculum implementation is the most important phase of curriculum development; it is the actual practice of the intended curriculum which takes place in the classroom. Chaudhary (2015) defines curriculum implementation by stating that it entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects.

Chaudhary (2015) asserts that the curriculum implementation process involves helping learners to acquire knowledge or experience. Therefore, it is important to note that curriculum implementation cannot take place without the learner. Nghihalwa (2018) affirms that to implement is to put a curriculum into practice. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers, as curriculum implementers, to participate in curriculum

planning. Involvement in planning makes implementation easier, since the teacher would be familiarised with the rationale for the inclusion of certain components of the curriculum, instead of being presented with a *fait accompli* after others have worked it all out at the macro level. Teachers need to find better ways to implement the curriculum to learners, and be more aware of learners' abilities and cognitive levels when implementing the curriculum.

School management teams (SMTs) should manage the curriculum in such a way that it has a positive impact on learners' learning, and improves equity across school systems. When it comes to implementation, the individual teacher is key. Makunja (2016) avers that curriculum implementation does not start until the teacher interacts with learners. Furthermore Makunja (2016) posits that curriculum implementation is enhanced by:

- strong administrative commitments;
- positive pressure and support from within the school;
- the allocation of resources to fund change;
- the removal of competing practices, and;
- regular evaluation of innovation linked with current classroom practices.

In South Africa, there have been numerous revisions of the curriculum, which have added to the challenges that teachers face, especially since none were involved in the discussions that prompted these changes. In most cases, they have been given the new documents and are expected to implement them, with fairly minimal training in the form of workshops – some offered during school hours. Govender (2018) argues that failure to successfully implement the various curriculum reforms in South Africa results from the fact that attention has been on the educational change desired, rather than on the training needed to implement the desired changes. Teachers face many demands, one of which is to keep the focus on curriculum changes in order to teach what is expected by the Department of Education and not simply what they know and have always taught. Educational officials are always

searching for new ways to help learners improve their performance, and this is done largely to improve curriculum content and approaches.

Mngomezulu (2015) states that curriculum implementation needs monitoring by curriculum managers so that they are aware of the needs of learners and the obstacles encountered by teachers during their teaching. Proper monitoring of the curriculum can inform the school leadership about the needs of learners and the challenges faced by teachers when implementing the curriculum.

Molapo and Pillay (2018) highlight that teachers' heavy workloads have had a significant negative impact on effective curriculum implementation. A too-high workload is always linked to unsatisfactory outcomes and lack of motivation among teachers to support learners. It is clear that many learners may be receiving an education of compromised quality for a number of reasons. One of these, especially in rural areas, is that parents and teachers have low expectations of what rural learners are capable of, and what they can achieve.

The quality of current educational practice in schools is of wide concern, not only in South Africa. Burrin (2011) states that in Mauritius, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has made certain important changes in education in order to achieve quality education as part of UNESCO's recommendations. UNESCO aimed to achieve quality education in Mauritius by 2020, and to change from the high-level achievement of a few to high-level achievement by all. Burrin (2011) lists two characteristics of quality education: it should enhance learners' cognitive development, and it should foster shared values, creativity and emotional development. Dembele and Miaro-II (2003) claim that to improve the effectiveness of teaching, efforts need to be made to increase coverage of the whole curriculum and enhance retention of knowledge. There also needs to be pedagogical renewal and ongoing teacher development. The implementation of a quality curriculum, along with teacher training to implement it well, is recommended as one way to improve learners' performance in primary schools (Dembele & Miaro-II, 2003). The curriculum needs to be designed in accordance with learners' ages and stages of development for it to make sense. For instance, Grade R learners need to be taught with suitable teaching aids such as pictures, videos and colourful charts.

Rakumako and Laugksch (2010) contend that in South Africa, teacher quality means teachers who are always determined to do their work in the best way, beginning with proper preparation, and proceeding to implementation and assessment. Teacher preparation strongly influences learners' levels of achievement. Furthermore, Rakumako and Laugksch (2010) declare that among the many factors that influence achievement in their subjects, teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills in their subject area is acknowledged as key. Teachers' expertise is very important for a proper explication of content and for pedagogical content knowledge. They should know how to unpack the content in a manner that suits all learners' ages and grades.

Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafson, Spaul and Armstrong (2011) postulate that in South Africa, the quality of education varies widely. They characterise the South African school system as effectively consisting of two differently functioning subsystems. The first comprises the majority of learners, who are located in a historically disadvantaged system – mainly black and coloured learners. Second there are the schools that historically served white learners and produced educational achievements closer to the norms of developed countries. All learners should be taught in the same way, using the same resources as those used by learners in historically 'white' schools. Currently, schools are classified as 'no fee' (quintiles 1-3) and 'fee-paying' schools (quintiles 4-5). Since South Africa is a democratic country said to be a rainbow nation, there should be no differences when it comes to the resources and opportunities offered to its learners, irrespective of ethnic grouping and social status. The second subsystem serves mostly white and Indian learners, although black and coloured middle-class learners are increasingly migrating to these schools (Van der Berg et al., 2011, p.2).

There is increasing and strong interest among governments, institutions, international agencies and teachers in the use of open and distance education methods and technologies for initial training and continuing professional development of teachers (Amadi, 2016). All professions require a continuous update of knowledge and skills, and teaching is no exception. It is universally acknowledged that an educator's professional development does not end with the initial pre-service training. Over time, the knowledge and skills of staff members in schools are subject to deterioration, and

new developments in educational thinking render their skills outdated or inefficient. Educators will not spontaneously change the way they manage the curriculum in their classrooms (Steyn, 2004). They need ongoing training in order to do this. The Department of Education organises workshops each year to help and guide teachers to implement the curriculum effectively. If there were no developmental workshops for them, teachers would not change the way they manage and implement the curriculum in their classrooms.

Molapo and Pillay (2018) contend that teacher training is key to improving curriculum implementation. However, in the USA there is a concern about inadequate training of some student teachers who are required to teach the most vulnerable learners with numerous learning needs (Kruger, 2017). The issue of inadequate preparation of teachers is thus an international phenomenon. As the UNESCO documents point out, teachers should be individuals who are qualified, professionally trained, motivated and well supported in order for learners' performance to be improved.

Teacher development makes a difference to what the teacher does in the classroom, and what the teacher does in the classroom is positively correlated with learner achievement. In a study conducted by Ampiah (2010), it was highlighted that in Ghanaian primary schools there is a high proportion of untrained teachers, which has serious implications for the delivery of quality education to improve learners' performance in schools. In another study in Ghana, Mensah (2016) revealed that since 2005, Ghana Education Services (GES) has developed a framework for the implementation of an in-service education and training (INSET) policy for basic education. The aim is to establish an institutional structure for continuous professional development of primary school teachers, with the intention of improving learner performance in primary schools.

Mucavele (2008) avers that success in curriculum implementation relies on several factors, such as the school environment, the availability of teaching and learning resources, teaching-learning methodologies, evaluation strategies, the socio-cultural setting, attitudes of learners, and teachers' and other stakeholders' involvement in the process. It is still not clear how learners, educators, subject specialists and principals perceived the new curriculum introduced in 2004. Mucavele (2008) posits

that successful curriculum implementation requires adequate financial resources to support the process. Financial resources are truly needed because there little can be achieved without the necessary infrastructure and resources, all of which cost money.

2.3.4 Monitoring and evaluating curriculum implementation

Monitoring and evaluation is a complex phenomenon that requires a multidisciplinary approach that is skill intensive. According to Magagula (2019) and Safriti, Timan, Kurnianing, Alam, Argadinata, Ahmad and Fahmi (2020), monitoring and evaluation involves a set of institutional structures and various management systems and processes, e.g., standards, strategies, plans, performance indicators and information systems. It requires effective lines of reporting and accountability to ensure that all three spheres of government (or, in this case, a school or educational system) fulfill their monitoring and evaluation roles effectively.

Monitoring and evaluating of curriculum implementation refers to continuous systematic checking of activities that should be carried out by quality assurance and standards officers, principals and departmental heads to facilitate effective curriculum implementation in all schools (Ndambuki, 2016). Furthermore, Ndambuki (2016) contends that monitoring and evaluation is a process that helps programme implementers make informed decisions regarding programme operations, service delivery and effectiveness, using objective evidence. It involves an ongoing and routine collection of information to assess whether a programme has made efficient use of resources and is on track with the prescriptions of curriculum policy documents.

Kayani, Begum, Kayani and Naureen (2011) contend that adequate, rigorous, inclusive and continuous monitoring and supervising is one of the most important ways to ensure the successful implementation of any educational programme. Teachers should monitor learners' work to see if the expected work has been done to the required standard, and departmental heads should ascertain whether teachers are doing justice to the curriculum by checking teachers' work. This includes looking at lesson plans, teachers' files and learners' exercise books to check if the work has

been done. The principal should also monitor all school operations to ensure that the school functions in an acceptable way. Supervision of work is very important. Kayani, et al. (2011) define monitoring as a continuous assessment of project implementation in relation to agreed schedules, and use of inputs, infrastructure and service beneficiaries. Monitoring provides an early indication of the likelihood that expected results will be achieved, provides an opportunity to validate programme theory and logic (Mensah, 2016), and enables leaders to make necessary changes in programme activities and management teams.

2.3.5. Supervision of the intended curriculum

Once the curriculum has been set to help teachers improve learners' performance, it needs to be supervised by qualified individuals, such as principals as school leaders. Leepo (2015) states that subject advisers are education specialists who monitor and supervise the implementation of curriculum in the classroom, and provide and source relevant learning and teaching support material to improve performance in various subjects. Daud, Dali, Khalid and Fauzee (2018) contend that the supervision of teachers' classroom teaching and learning is mandatory to guide teachers' teaching in classrooms, as well as to enhance their motivation through constructive feedback. Departmental heads should monitor teachers to ensure that teaching and learning are taking place as they should. This is done to support and encourage teachers to work well, not to find fault with them. These authors state that a skilled supervisory process can help the school to evaluate the competence of teachers in terms of skills, knowledge and behaviour in teaching and learning (Daud, et al. 2018; Aziz, Mahmood & Rehman, 2018). Supervision also helps teachers improve their teaching proficiency so that they become more confident and able to overcome learning problems amongst learners. Daud, et al.'s (2018) study in Nigeria found that the monitoring role of supervisors is undertaken by school principals for improving educational programmes, which helps teachers to achieve both qualitative and quantitative instructional delivery.

From the foregoing, it may be deduced that supervision is an indispensable variable in the teaching and learning process, and in achieving overall school and educational objectives (Kotirde & Yunos, 2014). Supervision processes should be known by all

teachers, so that they are prepared and not unduly distressed when their work is observed and critiqued. Some teachers are employed and operate in classrooms without orientation or any formal training; in such cases regular evaluation and feedback needs to be designed so that they receive the help necessary to equip them with suitable methodologies and skills. The absence of supervision and support in primary schools was seen as a problem in the early years of the introduction of reception year classes in mainstream schooling in South Africa (Modise, 2017, p, 2).

Sethusha (2014) contends that workshops are conducted in all nine provinces in South Africa, some of which focus on principals and the important roles they play. Others guide teachers and student teachers to support learners effectively and efficiently. There are two major constructs which are the key to supporting the proper supervision of the curriculum: *support from departmental officials*, and *support for innovation*. The former refers to actions undertaken by organisations external to the schools (Hervie & Winfu, 2018); in this case, the national Department of Basic Education, which influences practice either through assistance or sanction. Support for innovation refers to support available from within the schools themselves. It includes four key subconstructs; namely, physical resources, school ethos and management, teacher factors and learner factors (Govender, 2018, p. 2).

The following section discusses challenges faced by educators in the quest to improve learners' performance through curriculum management at the school level.

2.4 Challenges faced by schools and educators in improving learners' performance through curriculum management

There are many issues in schools that pose challenges to schools and teachers. They include demographic factors, policy changes and emerging technologies (Aydin et al., 2017). This point is confirmed by a number of researchers, including Mandukwini (2012), Kyahurwa (2013), Mizzi (2013), Tirfe (2016), Mohangi, Krog, Stephens and Nel (2016), McDowell, Jack and Compton (2018), Molapo and Pillay (2018) and Magagula (2019). Some of these challenges are as follows:

- There is a lack of leadership and ability to resolve conflict, with the poor attitudes of some teachers hindering the success of curriculum

implementation. In rural schools, especially, many principals are expected to add teaching to their many administrative tasks. This adds to their burden and can detract from their role as leaders.

- Lack of resources is an ongoing burden that hinders effective curriculum management, and is widely experienced in primary schools in both rural and urban areas. Lack of basic infrastructure for sanitation, shortages of human and financial resources, and inadequately stocked classrooms all contribute to an impoverishment of the learning environment.
- Teachers are experiencing increasing workloads, which means that many teachers hesitate to take available positions owing to the perception that responsibilities will increase. Principals are then challenged to provide instructional leadership in curriculum management.
- Lack of knowledge owing to poor training affects many teachers. Principals need to be well prepared to take on the rapid pace of change in matters regarding curriculum policy and implementation. While principles may be aware of the changes that are needed, in many cases, the changes do not filter down to the classroom level owing to inadequate training received by teachers. In many cases, even principals lack the necessary training.
- Lack of guidelines for the implementation of curriculum changes continue to hamper implementation. Teachers find that they are forced to juggle the old and the new curriculum, which creates stress and a sense of having to deal with too much input.
- In many cases, staff shortages force teachers to teach outside their area of specialisation. This causes problems in lesson preparation and pedagogical content knowledge. Lack of understanding of the structure of the discipline can create challenges for teachers. Moreover, they need to transform the content knowledge into suitable activities, create analogies and perform demonstrations to help learners learn, all of which is challenging if the teacher is unfamiliar with the subject.

Tirfe's (2016) study conducted in Ethiopia found that most school principals lack relevant skills, leadership qualities and commitment to school improvement

programmes. As a result, school improvement is greatly hindered by inadequate resources in terms of physical facilities and finances, and high leadership and teacher turnover. In Ethiopian schools, teachers teach in ramshackle buildings and crowded classrooms, and the non-availability of recreational facilities and an unattractive physical environment contributes to poor teaching and learning. The recommendations in this study were that Ethiopian school principals fully commit themselves to their work, including curriculum management, if they really want to improve learners' performance in their schools.

Mohangi, Krog, Stephens and Nel (2016) state that despite all the programmes designed to support education in rural environments, there has not been much change in the circumstances affecting rural education. Many rural schools in South Africa are impoverished, access to basic education is very difficult, and schools are in poor condition. Rural schools are exposed to isolated settings, with difficult access to public transport, erratic school attendance on the part of learners, and diverse learner backgrounds (Modise, 2017). In addition, many rural schools are as poor as the surrounding communities and lack basic infrastructure for sanitation, water, electricity, security measures to prevent burglary, and ICT. A number of multigrade classrooms, with their associated difficulties, may be found in rural schools (Molapo & Pillay, 2018).

Magagula (2019) states that one of the challenges faced by government is how to evaluate the degree to which its collective priorities – policies, projects and programmes – are implemented, and its objectives – quality education, poverty alleviation and quality basic health care – are being achieved in South African schools. However, Mucavele (2008) points out that there is a well-established tradition for monitoring the curriculum in managing development processes and outcomes, not least in the field of education. A new type of mechanism for delivering development interventions has come to the fore in the form of multi-stakeholder partnerships. These partnerships involve businesses in the private sector, along with non-government organisations working in the field of education. Partnerships of this sort often offer better education than either the government or private sector is able to achieve alone. They are also able to innovate and broaden participation in

decision making (Marriot & Goyder, 2009, p, 28).

Some of main the challenges faced by schools in terms of properly managing and implementing the curriculum are detailed in the followings sections.

2.4.1 Lack of parental involvement in their children's learning

Parental involvement requires that parents have aspirations for their children's academic achievements. This causes parents to interact with their children about education and school matters and will usually prompt them to participate in school activities, communicate with teachers about their children and supervise their children's homework (McDowell, Jack & Compton, 2018). Obayopo (2017) describes parental involvement as a dyadic relationship, which is a relationship characterised by interaction between two or more individuals – between the parent and the child, or the teacher, or another parent. Parental involvement implies a contribution and commitment by parents to the education of their children and participation, in some cases, in school management. Munje and Mncube (2018, p. 80) reveal that there are six aspects of parental involvement. These are: teachers helping parents to understand child development and have confidence in their parenting; communication between parents and school; parents' involvement in school volunteer opportunities; home-based learning; decision-making regarding school; and school-community collaboration. All of these aspects, if practised, would enhance parental involvement in children's education.

According to Obayopo (2018), parental involvement balances the educational equation of learning. Obayopo contends that it takes three parties for a learner to succeed in education: the learner, the teacher and the parent. If one part is missing, there will be no success. Tirfe (2016) argues that sometimes teachers' attitudes cause parents to distance themselves from their children's work. If teachers are friendly and welcoming to parents, parents are more likely to participate positively in their children's schoolwork.

A study conducted in Singapore by Yuen and Cheung (2013) illustrates that a high level of parental engagement with school promotes pro-school behaviours, positive

emotional adjustment and personal bonding with the school. In Switzerland, parental involvement is part of every school. Parents are obliged to send learners to school on time and their constitutional rights concerning education give priority to parents. In that country, parents are highly involved, and will speak up about issues such as examinations and decisions of the school authority; for example, when their children are moved from a class, or when they do not manage to reach a higher grade (Straumann & Egger, 2011, p. 87).

Obayopo's (2017) study in Nigeria found that every child has two major sets of educators who have an impact on their learning and development – their parents and their teachers. Parents retain their influence on the child's life throughout formal schooling and beyond. The findings of this study reveal that a learner needs both teachers and parents in order to attain a high level of education. Kolumban (2015) avers that in the Congo it is often a lack of parent-teacher communication that leads teachers and administrators to infer that parents are not involved or do not wish to be involved in their child's education. According to that study, Congolese parents promised to spend more time helping their children if they were taught specifically how to perform certain learning activities that their children were expected to practice at home.

Mmotlane, Winnaar and Kivilu (2009) argue that very low levels of parental involvement have been detected in South African schools in recent years. Some of the causes include negative attitudes and inferior feelings of parents, single parenthood, and child-headed families. There are many reasons why parents may not engage in formal participation in school activities. Some of these are tied to the practical issues of daily life, including other engagements and responsibilities, such as being at work or unavailability owing to commitments at home, including child-care commitments. This is particularly the case with single parent households (Poole, 2017). Parents are not solely to blame for the lack of home-school communication. Schools also need to encourage collaboration and commitment as part of school-home learning. Many teachers believe that it is not their responsibility to contact parents. The reality is that teachers should contact and encourage the involvement of parents, since they are familiar with the children's learning challenges and can

explain things to parents that parents might not otherwise be aware of. It is very unlikely that most parents would go to their child's school without being invited to do so by a teacher for a particular reason. Teachers' attitudes can be obstacles for parents.

Parents often complain that teachers do not make enough effort to understand their children, and that they lack care and concern. Parents may also hesitate to talk to teachers because usually the only time that teachers call parents is to report a problem, and parents are often intimidated by school (Obayopo, 2017). Other reasons they may be reluctant to get involved include being intimidated by the educational jargon that teachers use, the nature of the curriculum, and the lack of respect shown by some teachers towards parents (Flynn, 2007, p, 24). Many teachers tend not to show respect to parents, and will often treat them as minors, like their children. Teachers' attitudes go a long way with parents, and in effect paint a picture of the entire school (Obayopo, 2017). If teachers are unwelcoming and intimidating, the school will be perceived as unwelcoming and intimidating. Positive, friendly and compassionate attitudes towards parents portray the school as a good and welcoming environment. Positive attitudes on the part of teachers might lead parents to go the extra mile in helping their children academically, thus easing the teachers' burden (Poole, 2017).

2.4.2 Lack of training and development for educators in curriculum management

It is very important for teachers to further their education and training to help renew their knowledge and skills, and pass on the relevant information in a way that will improve learners' performance. Teacher training and professional development are seen as central mechanisms for the improvement of teachers' content knowledge and teaching skills in order to meet high educational standards (Bourdesa, 2016).

Teacher training and development are two broad goals in education. According to Richards and Farrel (2005, p. 3) the term *training* refers to activities directly focused on teachers' present responsibilities and is typically aimed at short-term and immediate goals. The following are examples of goals in training:

- Learning how to interpret the curriculum using effective strategies to open a

lesson; having all the information needed as references in learners' work.

- Adapting the textbook to match the class; learning how to use group activities in a lesson; helping learners according to their levels of understanding.
- Using classroom aids and resources, and techniques for giving learners feedback on their performance. Classroom aids such as charts, posters and chalkboards should be used to give learners corrections on what they were expected to do.

In summary, training usually revolves around curriculum subjects and is provided to teachers through workshops over periods of time. The main objective of such workshops is to keep teachers up to date in their subject areas. This goal can also be realised when teachers are given opportunities to collaborate and use team teaching to enhance the teaching of all.

On the other hand, Craft (2000, p.9) avers that the term *professional development* is usually used to encompass all types of learning undertaken by teachers beyond the point of their initial training (Sukasni & Efendy, 2017). Teachers should show all the strategies they learned from the training they received in order to fulfill their professional goals. Bourdesa (2016) identifies the following goals for professional development:

- understanding how teachers' roles change according to the kind of learners teachers are teaching;
- understanding the kinds of decision-making that occur during a lesson;
- reviewing teachers' own theories and principles of language teaching;
- developing an understanding of different styles of teaching;
- determining learners' perceptions of classroom activities.

Thus it may be inferred that professional development for teachers is deeper and broader in scope than training. Unfortunately, none of the goals mentioned above may be said to be widely achieved yet. For effective curriculum management, teachers need proper training in how to use curriculum management to improve learners' performance. Guskey (2000) maintains that professional development is an

intentional, ongoing and systematic process. It should be delivered in a way that is intentional and purposeful, and comprise planned events with a well-structured outline and clearly defined goals. Teacher training and professional development should never be conceived as what Guskey (2000, p. 17) describes as ‘a set of random, unrelated activities having no clear direction or intent.’

Subject advisers are responsible for supporting teachers in effectively delivering curriculum in the classroom and in strengthening their content knowledge (Leepo, 2015). The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (2012) stated that the fact that some schools underperformed in the former Annual National Assessments (ANA) and the National Senior Certificate (NSC) indicated that educators have little knowledge of content. Teachers need a deep and clear understanding of all the content of the subjects they teach, so that they are able to unpack content clearly for learners. The Department observed that the underperformance of schools and learners shows that some educators are not yet excellent at dealing with all content, which creates knowledge gaps in learners’ levels of achievement.

The Department suggested that a provincial curriculum management strategy would improve the situation by providing direct tuition to teachers on specific topics before they met learners in the classroom. The strategy would consider ways of assessing the extent to which teachers know and understand the content of the curriculum.

Richards (2000) defines content knowledge as a core set of theories, concepts and practices regarding learning and teaching, while Balls, Thames and Phelps (2008) see content knowledge as including knowledge of the subject and its organisational structures. Richards (2000) identified the four sources of content knowledge as:

- *Expert opinion*: This refers to the views of subject matter specialists and other experts as to what teachers need to know;
- *Task analysis*: This refers to deriving content knowledge from an analysis of the situations in which teachers work, the tasks they typically perform on the job, and the kinds of skills they need for performing those tasks;
- *Teacher-perceived needs*: These are teachers’ expressions of need for professional development; and

- *Current practice or tradition:* This refers to what programmes currently offer to teachers in training.

The four sources of knowledge provide guidance for teachers on how they should plan their teaching. The assumption is that exposing teachers to a variety of content information will enhance their grasp of the subject.

Tanang and Abu (2014) assert that the main challenge for the Indonesian nation is improving its human resources and its education sector. This can be done by improving their education system and practising quality curriculum management. This would empower teachers to manage the curriculum better and thus enhance learning outcomes. The education sector is a critical sector for the development of human capital (Sukasni & Efendy, 2017). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Indonesia and neighbouring countries oversees the progress of quality education. It aims to support teachers to improve instructional processes in their classes. The UNDP identified that the low level of Indonesian education directly affects society's quality and ability. More emphasis is needed on the development of formal education, carried out at all levels – primary, secondary and tertiary. Indonesian teachers suffer from being unable to manage their classes because they lack proper training. The low quality of graduates is one proof that education in Indonesia has not optimally developed (Sukasni & Efendy, 2017, p. 184).

Based on an observed lack of proper training for educators for improving learners' performance in Ghana, Hiervie and Winful (2018) maintain that there has been a steady decline in the academic performance of learners. They point out that teacher education, training and development are a means of professional upgrading and should deal with all developmental functions directed at the maintenance and enhancement of teachers' professional competence. Atta and Mensah (2015) confirm that increasing opportunities for teacher training through continuous learning constitutes an important measure to positively impact the quality of classroom instruction and learners' learning. Proper and ongoing training of teachers reduces the teaching burden, since it gives teachers clarity on how to do their work in an easy way. They manage to prepare for practical classroom activities while still training.

Professional development is an ongoing, sustainable process of professional learning

that allows for collaboration and the sharing of professional knowledge (McDowell, Jack & Compton, 2018). Teachers' education programmes aim to shape and develop a prospective teacher's identity across all areas in which competence is expected. These teacher education programmes are the focus of intense scrutiny, especially with regard to their quality and relevance, and the capacity and skills of the teachers they produce (Deacon, 2012, p. 20).

Deacon (2012) identifies five aspects of improving teachers' performance: the development of suitable learning programmes; improvements made to the overall quality of those who conduct teacher education programmes; initial teacher education programmes (which tend to be weak in the areas of practice, teaching and work-based learning); preparing learning for a career in teaching; and picking up on issues raised with regard to poor learners.

According to Mizell (2010), professional development refers to educational experiences related to an individual's work. It assists the individual to learn and apply new knowledge and skills that will improve their performance on the job. The effectiveness of professional development depends on how carefully educators conceive, plan and implement the educator development curriculum. Effective professional development enables educators to gain the knowledge and the skills they need to address learners' learning challenges (Deacon, 2012). Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for educators to continue to improve their knowledge and skills so that they can help learners achieve. Improving learner performance can therefore be a function of proper training and development of the teacher. Effective curriculum management requires on-point, continuous development and support of teachers, especially in view of that fact that curricula are subject to continuous change as society changes. Teachers also need to make their own efforts at self-development and upgrade their level of knowledge on how to deal with day-to-day teaching-related activities.

2.4.3 Overcrowded classrooms and non-conducive learning environments

A classroom is said to be overcrowded when the number of learners exceeds the optimum level and hinders the teaching-learning process (Khan & Mohamed, 2012).

In South Africa, classroom ratios for teachers and learners are set at 1:40 (primary) or 1:35 (secondary). Classroom with ratios higher than that can be referred to as overcrowded, and teachers will not be able to provide individual attention, or support learners who are struggling or need extra time for their learning. West and Meier (2020) refer to overcrowding as a non-conducive learning environment, as learners in the classroom lack sufficient material and attention. Another non-conducive classroom condition is multi-grade teaching in one room. Ibem, Alagbe and Owosemi (2017) define learning environments as the diverse physical locations, contexts and cultures in which learners learn. Teachers around the world face many obstacles when attempting to teach in an overcrowded classroom; these include instructional, management, assessment and discipline problems. Overcrowded classrooms have resulted in frustration, despondency, discouragement and negative attitudes among learners (Muthusamy, 2015, p. 1).

Learners in overcrowded classrooms lose concentration and focus on distractions, thus failing to absorb important curriculum content. In such situations learners who are not concentrating on their lessons disturb the whole class. More classrooms should be constructed and more teachers need to be employed in order to overcome such situations. Mngomezulu (2015) contends that if there is nothing done regarding the issue of overcrowded classrooms, there is no chance that teachers will be able to manage the curriculum at classroom level to improve performance.

Marais (2016) stresses that overcrowded classrooms are unfortunately part of South African education, and will remain so for the immediate future, and perhaps even for the long-term future. There have always been lamentations about facilities and infrastructure provision in South African schools, but very little improvement has been effected. It seems that our schools will face the challenge of overcrowded classrooms, for some time. Unfortunately, as Marais (2016) contends, very few teaching improvement are possible under such conditions. This is a challenge in most rural primary schools in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Kim (2003) stated that in Korean schools there has been a huge change in overcrowded classrooms. In 1990 a typical primary school classroom was crowded, with an average of 41 learners per teacher. The Korean government fully achieved its

aim to have fewer than 35 learners per class. However, the improved ratio of learners to teachers seems not have resulted in a marked improvement in learning outcomes for learners. Kim (2003) contends that in the past, there was order and respect in the classroom, despite the overcrowding; learners paid attention to their teachers, and learned from the available material. Things have changed: learners now show less interest in school material, give less respect to their teachers, school discipline is poorer, and learners show less enthusiasm for attending school than in the past. Kim speculates that the change in attitudes may have to do with a greater awareness of learners' rights, the influence of social media and strained family dynamics. With the proliferation of access to the internet, learners are able to compare their education to that of their neighbouring schools and/or countries, and want to do what is done there. Kim (2003) contends that Korean education officials should also provide their schools with proper material that meets the requirements of the current curriculum.

In a study conducted in Nigeria, Ololuye, Ajayi, Oyebola and Ajayi (2017) reveal that in the formal school community a teacher/learner ratio of 1:25 is expected. However, in spite of this recommendation, public schools in Nigeria operate with a teacher: learner ratio of between 1:50 and 1:70. This phenomenon has resulted in a shortage of infrastructure, books, instructional material and other useful items needed for effective teaching and learning in order to promote learners' performance. It also creates a challenge during assessment processes. Epri (2016) complains that overcrowded classes in Nigerian schools, as in Zambia and Ethiopia, hinder teachers' ability to give attention to individual learners, and slow the progress of learning. Nonetheless, in spite of the shortage of needed infrastructure in schools, admission into primary schools in Nigeria proliferates annually. The admission gallop is also reported in Pakistan and other countries. Management of overcrowded classrooms should be taken into consideration by school heads (Babatunde, 2015, p.5). More schools need to be built in Nigeria and elsewhere in order to accommodate all learners and do away with overcrowded classrooms, and more teachers need to be employed.

2.4.4 Shortage of learning and teaching support material (LTSM)

There is always an outcry that there is a lack of teaching and learning resources to support teachers, and of educational tools and equipment to meet the needs of learners, especially for those learners with special needs in the inclusive classroom (Khoaeane, 2012; Ludago 2020). Teachers cannot cover the curriculum in time and cannot teach effectively when they lack learning and teaching support material (LTSM). The prescription, procurement, distribution, and maintenance of LTSM is one of the core functions of education departments. The Department of Basic Education in Mpumalanga Province (2011) asserts that currently the DBE has no specific unit responsible for overseeing the collation of information on the material that has to be bought to cater for the various needs of learners and teachers.

Riet (2012) states that there is no doubt that sufficient high quality LTSM is key for effective curriculum delivery. LTSM provides teachers with a syllabus as well as methods of curriculum delivery. It supports the interaction between teachers and learners with the aim of improving learners' performance. Riet (2012) proclaims that LTSM should be upgraded timeously, because without it, teaching and learning is a futile exercise in all grades and in all schools. Mopeli (2017) asserts that there are challenges and dilemmas in school subjects with aspects such as the availability of LTSM, overcrowded classrooms, and teachers' knowledge of subject content. It has been found that quite a number of teachers in primary schools are teaching the grades they are not supposed nor qualified to teach (Maphalala, et al., 2018, p.12).

Bett, Zau and Rice (2003) concur that LTSM is essential for effective curriculum delivery. It is imperative to ensure that teaching material is, first, provided in sufficient numbers for all schools and, second, that it is effectively used in order to facilitate the provision of quality teaching and learning. The constantly changing curriculum in South Africa affects the provision of educational resources, which have to change as the curriculum changes. Without proper LTSM the quality of education will continue to deteriorate (Mangele, 2012).

Section 2.5 below discusses policies on curriculum management and their alignment with practice.

2.5 Policies on curriculum management and their alignment with practice

Curriculum management is guided by policies, which should be formulated to align with practical realities in schools. Policy is defined by Moore (2017) as an explicit and implicit single decision or group of decisions which set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide the implementation of previous decisions. A policy serves the purpose of ensuring that every official action of an organisation has a basis or backing. It is an overall guide that gives the general limits and direction in which administrative action will take place (Okoroma, 2006). Kidwai, Burnette, Rao, Nath, Bajaj and Bajpai (2013) concur that a policy is expected to set standards and procedures for different levels of organisational authority. A policy should be formulated and adopted through a political process which acknowledges the reality and legitimacy of conflicting interests and desires among its constituents. It should give guidance for properly directed and coordinated action towards the attainment of the desired goals; it should contain information on the broad objectives that should be reached; it should be a binding guide on the actions of those implementing it; and it should be enforceable and enforced by the society which formulates it (Okoroma, 2006, p. 247).

National policies in education are anchored in a nation's overall vision and objectives (Okoroma, 2006). In Nigeria, there are five main objectives: *a free democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy; and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.* These objectives promise to benefit everyone in the nation. Policy makers should design policies that include these objectives, and learners should be exposed to them from an early age so that they will not lose focus on what the future is about.

In South Africa, the Department of Education (2010) states that the Minister determines the national education policy in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996. Section 3(4) (1) of the Act identifies the seven roles of educators as: learning mediator, interpreter and designer of learning programmes and material; leader, administrator and manager; scholar, researcher and lifelong learner; community, citizenship and pastoral role assessor; and learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist

(Department of Education: Mpumalanga Province, 2012, p.3).

The national policy was promulgated in Government Gazette No. 36042 (28 December, 2012). It determines the minimum outcomes and standards and the processes and procedures for the assessment of learner achievement. The national policy covers the following: grouping of subjects, concessions, approved subjects, programme requirements, progression/promotion requirements, assessment, recording and reporting, time allocation and Grade 12 subject changes (Department of Education, Mpumalanga Province, 2012). All these actions make curriculum management understandable and easy to practice by suitable participants in curriculum management, which include school principals and teachers.

Policies are formulated in a manner that makes curriculum management practical and suited to fulfil its goals. Policy making is the first step in any planning cycle, and planners must appreciate the dynamics of policy formulation before they can design implementation and evaluation procedures effectively. Policies differ in terms of their scope, complexity, environment, range of choices and decision criteria. Simons, Oates and McCulloch (2017) state that policy makers frequently construct carefully considered national priorities for education which reflect social consensus about the desirable aims of education – such as higher rates of participation, higher attainment in national examinations and higher equity in outcomes.

In a school context, the Department of Education in Mpumalanga (2012) mentions that supplementary policy documents are to be referred to when compiling a school policy. These supplementary documents are the Language-in-Education Policy and the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. Other policies are those that are related to teaching content and assessment, recording and reporting. These policies are able to guide the instructional processes of schools.

Globally, the issue of aligning policies to actual practice is always a debate; hence Jeong, Lee and Wi (2014) argue that policy makers need to make every effort to design and implement effective education policies for successful development in Asia. Education policy must be timely and provide efficacious prescriptions for any

challenges that education stakeholders may confront. Currently, many curriculum management policies are unrealistic. They fail to account for the complexities inherent in teaching, which is why their influence on actual practice is usually negligible (Kidwai et al., 2013). It is better for educational departments and schools to draw up realistic policies which can be readily fulfilled, not those which are difficult to follow, interpret and implement, and lead to failure in the end. It is interesting to note that Asian policies are lacking in terms of curriculum management, as in South Africa. There is a need in both locations to revisit policies on curriculum management in order to improve learners' performance. Lack of policy alignment affects practice in Asia because policies designed for a good purpose are not followed by curriculum managers and other parties involved (Alami, 2016). Policies are there to help and guide schools, but few practitioners stick to them as they are deemed impractical.

In Zimbabwe, the UNESCO Education Sector (2016) states that there are priorities and objectives assigned to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to ensure greater accountability and promote more effective and efficient policy making. Monitoring and evaluation are two distinct but complementary processes that mutually reinforce each other. Poole (2017) argues that policies are designed to allow for monitoring the impact of a policy or the progress of programme activities against their overall objectives. Policies provide a framework against which to assess the outcome relevance of an activity, the impact of a programme or the effectiveness of the policy itself. Policies are therefore key to progress towards a desired goal.

In Zimbabwe, Ncube (2004, p. 69) identified three barriers that hinder policies in the management of the curriculum:

- *insufficient national budget* to enable the crafting and implementation of whatever policies are deemed fit for the development of quality education;
- *lack of policy on how to deal with dropouts and pregnancies* among schoolgirls. A lack of clarity on this matter stifles teaching efforts in schools because learners with such barriers are not separately catered for to meet curriculum management requirements.
- *The absence of enforced child labour laws* that may affect the internal

efficiency of more affluent neighbours (Ncube, 2004, p. 69). Zimbabwe lacks proper policies to guide and prosper their curriculum management. There is criticism that the country uses its monetary issues as a shield for avoiding the proper protocols that should promote school attendance.

The above is an indication that in many cases, policy implementation is not properly aligned and supported, and is inadequate for addressing the barriers listed above. The inadequacy of many educational policies means that in some cases they are simply not attended to.

A study conducted by Shoba (2009) in South Africa reveals that in recent years schools have witnessed major developments in educational policies aimed at improving the quality of education. The current curriculum replaced the old curriculum that was seen to promote racism, sexism, bureaucracy and so on. The new curriculum (CAPS) strives to equip teachers with the knowledge and expertise to ensure effective learning and teaching for economic growth and innovation in the 21st century.

The management of the curriculum is one of the key managerial functions of SMTs. An SMT should manage the school in a way that discriminates against no one, and not get drawn into the personal issues of individuals; instead, it should focus on implementing the curriculum in order to promote the country's economic growth and innovation.

A study conducted in Columbia on the alignment of policy and practice with regard to curriculum management states that policy should set standards and procedures for different levels of organisational authority on how colleagues deal with each other and manage their schools (Kidwai et al, 2013).

In rural India, the main challenges with regard to curriculum policy and practice were with local textbooks, and with teaching-learning methods that were not deemed suitable for all children.

In practice, the national curriculum framework in India is widely consulted when textbooks, teacher training and teacher learning material are designed. Educational policies and practices need regular updating to help all children gain relevant

knowledge and skills. It is worth noting that in the US, learners' performance is not impressive when they are tested through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in the application of knowledge. PISA tests are designed to measure learners' capacity to apply knowledge and skills in key subject areas (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012, pp.15).

In Malawi, Sichone (2019) found that the policy in each school is meant to be beneficial, but that many role-players and institutions are needed for these benefits to be accrued. Government needs to come to the realisation that public funds and public policies should prioritise services that offer the largest benefits to the community or country at large through positive learner performance. The findings of this study confirmed that Malawi lacks funds for providing for full education needs. Sichone (2019) contends that even with the little funds it has, Malawi could do more to make education its first priority. Malawi should also make greater efforts to seek financial assistance from developed countries such as Britain.

Hennessey et al. (2010) suggest that information and communication technology (ICT) policies can serve several important functions. Such functions include a rationale, a set of goals, and a vision on how education systems would work if ICT were introduced in teaching and learning. They mention that an enhanced ICT policy would benefit learners, teachers, parents and the general population of any given country to help improve learners' performance.

Vandeyar (2013) confirms that South Africa has an e-education policy, in which there are guidelines for teacher training, which should include ICT-related knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Vandeyar states that in the South African context, policy making is a competence of the national Department of Education. There is, however, a degree of devolution of power that allows districts and provinces to make some decisions about implementing the policy. Faleni (2005) states that new education policy initiatives brought about by the South African Schools Act introduced a new era in the management and control of schools, and the delivery of the new broader framework of the Education Department (Department of Education, 2012). Policy initiatives in South Africa are consistent with international trends, where the school system has been configured to allow devolution of responsibilities to principals.

Empowering of SGBs and the encouragement of parental choice and voice in school governance are also considered part of the policy.

The following section examines models used for curriculum management, which informed the model recommended in this study.

2.6 Models used for curriculum management

Models are used by curriculum leaders to give effect to curriculum management in schools. According to O'Neil (2015), a curriculum model is a broad term referring to guides or documents used in education to determine specific aspects of teaching, such as subject, time frame and manner of instruction. Wallis and Voltz (2015) argue that the curriculum model used by Bryan Independent School District (ISD) in Texas is based on the principle of alignment. Maponya (2015) defines a model as a simplified representation of a phenomenon such as a thing or a process, with the model being closely related to the characteristics of the given phenomenon from input and outcome perspectives.

A model assumes that leadership occurs in a social setting. It caters for management of curriculum at different levels of the system (Moonsammy-Koopasammy, 2012). Myende (2014) asserts that the failure to improve education, specifically rural education, emanates from the employment of a deficit model for educational improvement. From the above explanations of curriculum models, it can be said that curriculum models provide guidelines on teaching time, core content and skills to be taught.

Barretto (2012) states that in Brazil, curriculum models are used for external evaluations, particularly for standardised learner performance assessments. These are the preferred instrument for incorporating the working logic of the public school system that has used management models for the regulation of public education policies. In Brazil, the hegemonic model prevails. This is a model concerned with domination, and ensures that certain ideas are dominant over others (De Bernardi, 2018). The educational model used in Brazil has given rise to conflict concerning the purpose of education and the ways in which social forces shape education, especially those social forces that support government proposals.

In pedagogy, product and process models may be used. The *product model* can be traced back to Tyler (1949), and focuses on results, such as the attainment of a certain grade or objective. The *process model* of Stenhouse (1975) focuses on how things happen in the learning process and is more open-ended in nature. A curriculum founded on the process model places emphasis on how learners learn, what they are thinking and how will it impact future learning (James, 2012). Teaching and learning is seen as a process towards achieving stated learning outcomes. O'Neil (2015) avers that the implementation phase of the process-based curriculum assumes that learning is an active process on the part of the learner, and is concerned with solving meaningful problems.

In Kenya, Jonyo and Jonyo (2019) states that post-modernist thinkers in Kenya criticise the educational model as being rigid, classified and authoritarian. It is possible that the curriculum model employed by Kenya did not meet its aim, or was not seriously considered. The criticism makes the point that school-based supervision represses teachers' independence, and that a rational-technical understanding of supervision reduces the effectiveness of teachers. Those who supervise teachers are seen as dominators with the authority to diagnose teachers' pedagogical lapses and impose solutions. Bett (2016) contends that there is another model used in Kenya to improve learners' performance – the cascade model. This model is perceived as cost-effective and able to disseminate new ideas through the educational system relatively quickly. In short, a cascade model makes use of a number of layers depending on the numbers being targeted. Bett (2016, p.6) emphasises that the cascade model also has its challenges, including an inability to meet all teachers' needs.

Maponya (2015) explains that in South Africa, there are eight curriculum management models for improving learners' performance. Those curriculum management models are: the model of instructional leadership, the model of the principal as instructional leader, Carrier's model of instructional leadership, the collaborative model of learner achievement; Harlinger and Murphy's model, Murphy's model and Weber's model. The models are discussed below:

2.6.1 Sebastian and Allenworth's (2012) model of instructional leadership

This model is described as critical to the development and maintenance of an effective school (Ipsum, 2020). A model of instructional leadership expresses an empirical archetype and reflects how the leader and group's interface results in organisational outcomes (Maponya, 2015). It shows a relatively comprehensive set of practices and conditions that can function as mediating variables in the relationship between teachers and principals, who act as instructional leaders in improving learning achievements. Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) maintain that organisational support for learning starts with instructional leadership, ie, the principal, as the driver of change. The model stresses basic needs, such as order and safety in the school, which can have a strong effect on the motivation and learning of both educators and learners. Instructional leaders influence others to pair instructional practices with best knowledge of subject matter (Sharma, 2012). The instructional leadership model helps principals to lead successfully in any organisation or school where they may be placed (Nazim, 2016). For a school to be successful, principals may need to consider this model. The success of it depends on participatory leadership and the ability and expertise of many, which will augment the leadership ability of the principal.

2.6.2 The model of the principal as instructional leader

This model is based on the work of Supovitz, Sirinides and May (2009) and stresses achievement. It conceptualises the principal as the main instructional leader, where the principal sets the school's mission and goals, yet there is still a strong sense of community, trust and effective instruction. The following four skills revealed by the Share Team (2020) help principals to succeed in their leadership and curriculum management role: effective use of resources, positive communication skills, serving as an instructional resource, and being visible and accessible. Principals as instructional leaders need to have an effect that extends beyond the school to other schools. The principal as leader, together with teachers as peers, shape instructional practice for enhanced learner performance.

The problem with this model is that it excludes the responsibility of teachers, because instructional leadership is neither understood nor valued by district administrators or

local SGBs. The instructional leadership model is also problematic in that it does not cater for learners' democratic decision-making (Firmaningsih-Kolu, 2015, p. 9).

2.6.3 Carrier's instructional leadership model

The instructional leadership model of Carrier (2014, p. 5) distinguishes between the work of the principal as instructional leader and that of the educators. The principal should focus on quality learning for all learners, entertain high expectations for teaching and learning practice, and develop a school community around a common vision. Educators are expected to replicate the principals' functions in the classroom. Carrier's model helps schools attain success through stressing five key behaviours of principals, namely: providing a sense of vision to their schools, exercising participatory management, providing support for teaching and learning, monitoring instruction, and exhibiting resourcefulness (Maponya, 2015). Jenkins (2009) contends that the shortfalls of Carrier's instructional leadership model are that some principals simply do not measure up. Owing to their lack of knowledge and understanding of the model, principals themselves will not be able to appreciate the problems teachers and learners encounter. Instructional leaders need to know what is going on in the classroom. According to this model, the principal is expected to exhibit a strong professional will and fulfill the role of instructional leader, with the ultimate outcome of improved learner achievement.

2.6.4 The collaborative model of instructional leadership

This model was proposed by Tienken (2010), who views leadership as something that is widely dispersed within and between organisations. The essence of this model is that the principal needs to be aware that other people have expertise that can be used as part of distributed leadership. Instructional leadership shifts from top-down management to a more collaborative approach to promote effective learning. In this instructional leadership model, leadership expertise is seen not to reside solely in one gifted principal only, but throughout the school. There are gifted teachers, support staff and heads of department. The model encourages all in the profession to study for continuous improvement, and to access and use research to improve practice and learners' learning and capacity building.

Collaboration should extend to classroom practice, too. Learners may learn a lot from working in groups, but the learning potential of collaboration is underused in practice (Scager, Boonstra, Peeters, Vulperhorst & Wiegant, 2016). Social interaction is crucial for effective collaboration, as the learning outcomes of collaborative learning groups have been found to depend on the quality of discussion and argumentation (Hubbel & Goodwin, 2019). Explaining things to one another and discussing subject matter may lead to deeper understanding on the part of learners, enabling them to recognise misconceptions and strengthening their connections between new and previously learned information.

2.6.5 Harlinger and Murphy's model

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model is embedded in effective school research. They conceptualise instructional leadership as a two-dimensional concept made up of leadership functions and leadership processes (Hallinger & Murphy 1985, p.2).

There are eight leadership functions in this model: framing and communicating school goals; supervising and evaluating instruction; coordinating the curriculum; developing high academic standards and expectations; monitoring student progress; promoting the professional development of teachers; protecting instructional time; and developing incentives for students and teachers. There are six key leadership processes: communication; decision making; conflict management; group process; change process; and environmental interaction. Effective and regular communication is at the centre of this model. The model highlights the importance of clear and regular communication, which is essential in managing the relationships among teachers, principals and other staff.

In this regard policies should be put in place to protect instructional time which limit late coming, absenteeism and truancy. The principal as instructional leader should entertain high expectations and provide a school reward system for learners and teachers.

2.6.6 Murphy's model

Murphy's model was developed by Sue Atkins and Kathy Murphy in 1990 (Atkins & Murphy, 2018). This model was built upon analysis of previous models and

embedded in school-based research. This model has four dimensions: developing a mission and goals; managing the function of education; promoting an academic learning climate; and developing a supportive environment. These four dimensions are further broken down to sixteen principal behaviours.

The model offers a way of understanding instructional leadership based on school efficacy and improvement, staff development and organisational change. Leithwood, Seashore, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2009) assert that the nature and influence of Murphy's model is not yet sufficiently fine-grained to reveal how a carefully selected feature of a district or school can be systematically improved through planned intervention on the part of someone in a leadership role. The model stresses the process of learning, which involves the following aspects:

- self-awareness of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts;
- the ability to describe;
- the ability to critically analyse events or experiences using logical thinking;
- the ability to evaluate learning, events or experiences; and
- the ability to identify any learning that has occurred.

This model helps concerned individuals to think critically about something that has been learned or experienced.

2.6.7 Weber's model

Weber's model was developed by Max Weber in Germany in 1909. His work was considered the foundation of modern location theories (Weber, 1996). Weber argues that the increasing complexity of life increase the demands of citizens for government services. Instructional practice must cohere with the mission and teachers must be made aware of recent research and supplied with resources to realise the aim of education. This theory helps a lot in curriculum management as it raises awareness on the part of officials that as communities grow, citizens' demands increase, and educational provision needs to be augmented and expanded accordingly.

Weber (1996) identifies five domains of instructional leadership, which are

- defining the school's mission;
- managing the curriculum and instruction;
- promoting a positive learning climate;
- observing and improving instruction; and
- assessing the instructional programme.

Weber's model is linked to curriculum management because all its five domains constitute what is expected of a leader tasked with managing the curriculum. A positive learning climate depends largely on teachers' and learners' attitudes, which will be enhanced within an orderly and disciplined environment. Improving instructional processes depends on a relationship of trust between the principal and teachers through the provision of professional development activities.

Weber's model is ideal for South Africa because its educational systems are embedded in other social institutions – political, economic, religious and legal. Each sphere is conditioned by and affects the character of the other spheres through a complex dynamic relationship of material and ideational means. Education and its administration and leadership are historical phenomena, and the character of an educational organisation is determined by the values of the individuals comprising it (Samier, 2002). Weber's model can be used in South Africa to reach its curriculum management goals of improving learners' performance in schools. Mestry (2017) avers that by flexibly sharing leadership duties, and matching leadership duties with individuals who can perform them, school leaders can help South African schools attain better curriculum management.

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature and many empirical studies on the issue of curriculum management in schools. Issues of policy alignment to actual practice, challenges faced by SMTs in monitoring and managing the curriculum, and the status

quo in other countries were highlighted. Curriculum management is meant to improve learners' performance in all schools, both urban and rural. School leaders and all educational stakeholders should participate in curriculum management. In addition, all the proper measurements regarding learners' performance should be given serious attention. This literature review has shown that principals' and educators' experiences need to be gathered in order to understand how curriculum management is implemented across different types of primary schools in different social settings. The theoretical framework of this study – transactional theory and complexity theory – was also discussed, in relation to the aims of this study.

The following chapter presents the methodology and design of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a literature review guided by the objectives of the study. This chapter presents the research methodology used to obtain data in this study. It includes the research paradigm, research design, population and sampling procedures, the data collection instrument, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. The researcher collected data guided by the following study objectives:

- to investigate how curriculum management could improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit;
- to identify the curriculum management challenges faced by schools and educators in their quest to improve learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit;
- to ascertain if there is alignment in policy and practice with regard to curriculum management in schools; and
- to propose a curriculum management model that may be used to improve learners' performance in primary schools.

3.2 Research paradigm

The research paradigm refers to the philosophical assumptions or the basic set of beliefs that guide the actions and define the worldview of the researcher (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). File, Mueller, Wineski and Stremmel (2017) argue that a research paradigm is the philosophical stance in which our thinking and actions are embedded. This study used a qualitative approach and was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Dean (2018) asserts that the interpretivist paradigm draws on a range of methods, tools and techniques to secure an in-depth understanding of the

phenomenon under investigation. The researcher opted for this paradigm to obtain answers from participants involved in the study, which aimed to investigate curriculum management practices for improving learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit.

The central endeavour of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This approach makes an effort to 'get into the head' of the subjects of the study, and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking, or the meaning they are making of the context.

A research paradigm comprises three elements: a belief about the nature of knowledge, a methodology and criteria for validity (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. In seeking answers to the research questions, the researcher who follows the interpretive paradigm uses those experiences to construct and interpret their understanding from the collected data. Thahn and Thahn (2015) assert that the interpretivist paradigm supports scholars' exploration of their world by interpreting the understanding of individuals.

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) and Brooke (2013) argue that a paradigm comprises four elements: epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) state that ontological considerations are part of interpretivist research since ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions people make in order make sense of reality, or the very nature or essence of the social phenomenon investigators are investigating. Ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of existence or of reality, being or becoming, or a study of the basic categories of things that exist and their relations. Researchers working within the interpretivist paradigm rely on emic and small-scale, specific projects such as case studies, on the basis of which a relative ontology is proposed (Brooke, 2013).

The interpretivist paradigm accepts multiple meanings and ways of knowing. Knowledge is related to particular circumstances – historical, temporal, cultural, and subjective – and exists in multiple forms as representations of reality, which are interpretations of individuals (Levers, 2013). The researcher used this paradigm owing to its wide applicability and the fact that the participants expressed diverse

views. Responses varied because the participants perceive curriculum management in different ways. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on recognising and narrating the meaning of the endless variety of human experiences and actions.

3.3 Research design

A research design is the framework or guide used for the planning, implementation and analysis of a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It is the plan for answering the research question or hypothesis. Research designs may be classified as quantitative, qualitative or combination of the two. Other possible research designs are descriptive, experimental, correlational, diagnostic, case study and explanatory. This study is a case study, and qualitative in nature.

The researcher employed a qualitative research approach because she sought a deep and broad understanding of a phenomenon, which is best obtained through one-to-one interviews. The qualitative approach is ideal for understanding human behaviour from the participants' perspectives; for uncovering the thoughts, feelings, experiences, views and opinions of others with regard to a topic. In qualitative studies, the researcher is interested in the quality of responses, not the numerical facts or quantity of a phenomenon. The quantitative approach was not an option for this study because quantitative studies focus on numerical data, assuming a fixed measure to reality, which was not the case in this research.

3.3.1 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research is a holistic approach that involves discovery. It is also described as an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting, enabling the researcher to develop a level of detail from high involvement in participants' experiences (Williams, 2007). Qualitative research is a general way of thinking about conducting research (Astalin, 2013). Astalin (2013) states that qualitative research describes, either explicitly or implicitly, the purpose of the research, the role of the researchers, the stages of the research, and the method of data analysis. A qualitative research design is probably the most flexible of the various experimental techniques,

encompassing a variety of accepted methods and structures. Creswell (2014) lists five kinds of exploration that fall under the qualitative approach; namely, case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, content analysis and biography. The five qualitative approaches are discussed below.

- **Case studies:** These are detailed studies of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organisation or other phenomenon. Case studies are commonly used in social, education, clinical and business research (McCombes, 2020). In this study, the researcher used a multi case study in the form of the experiences of a number of schools as she investigated curriculum management in primary schools.
- **Grounded theory:** This is a well-known methodology employed in many research studies (Tie, Birks & Francis, 2019). Grounded theory sets out to discover or construct theory from data, which is systematically obtained and analysed using comparative analysis. This approach tends to be more complex than other approaches.
- **Ethnography:** This is a type of qualitative research that gathers observations, interviews and documentary data to produce detailed and comprehensive accounts of different social phenomena (Reeves, Peller, Goldman & Kitto, 2013). This approach provides a way forward to help overcome the limitations of relying or depending on interviews solely.
- **Content analysis:** This is the tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes or concepts within a given set of qualitative data. Kleinheksel, Rockich-Winston and Wyatt (2021) argue that content analysis is a well-established data analysis method that has evolved for the treatment of textual data.
- **Biography:** This is a detailed third-person account of another person's life story (MasterClass, 2021). It is a form of qualitative study because it contains basic information about the subject's life.

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) contend that a qualitative research design is worked out

using a combination of observations, interviews and document analysis.

The following section discusses the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research, in order to justify the choice of this approach in this study.

3.3.1.1 Advantages of qualitative research

Using qualitative research has some benefits (advantages) which are detailed by Rahman (2017) as follows:

- It produces detailed descriptions of participants' feelings, opinions and experiences. It also interprets the meanings of their actions.
- It holistically understands human experiences in specific settings.
- It uses the interpretivist research approach and is thus regarded as ideographic research, based on a study of individual cases and events. It has the ability to yield an understanding of different people's voices, meanings and events.
- It allows the researcher to discover the participants' inner experiences and to figure out how meanings are shaped through and in culture.
- Qualitative research methods such as participant-observation, unstructured interviews and direct observation describing events are commonly used to collect data easily.
- It has a flexible structure as the design can be constructed and reconstructed to a great extent.

All the advantages of the qualitative research caused the researcher to employ it for this study, since the study sought to understand, holistically, the views, opinions, experiences and values of the participants in a flexible way, making use of interviews and observation.

3.3.1.2 Disadvantages of a qualitative research

The approach has its disadvantages (Creswell 2014), as listed below:

- Qualitative research sometimes leaves out contextual details and focuses more on meanings and experiences.
- Policy-makers may give low credibility to results from the qualitative approach.

- Smaller sample sizes raise issues of generalisability to the whole population of the research.

McCombes (2020) expands on these disadvantages, adding others:

- *Unreliability*: In qualitative research, there is no objectivity with participant answers. In this study, participants were aware that the researcher is also a teacher and some of the responses may have consisted of what participants assumed would resonate with the researcher, rather than their true opinions.
- *Subjectivity*: The researcher is often a more integral part of the study than is the case in quantitative research. The researcher in this study interacted with participants during interviews, transcribed the recordings, and synthesised and analysed data through own reflection. All of this may have affected research results to some extent.
- *Limited generalisability*: Samples are small in qualitative data, which means the generalisability is limited. In this study, the researcher was unable to generalise the findings but hopes that they nonetheless assist in solving problems of curriculum management elsewhere.
- *Labour-intensive*: Qualitative studies involve a great deal of time and energy. The researcher in this study had to conduct several interviews, listen to all the recordings, compare with notes taken during interviews, transcribe all the recordings and identify themes, all of which are fairly intense and time-consuming activities.

This study follows a case study design. Case studies are an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or some other unit in which the researcher examines data (Kumar, 2014).

The following paragraph discusses case studies in general.

3.3.2 Case studies

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that a case study examines a bounded system, or a case over time, in depth, employing multiple sources of data found in the

setting. Heale (2017) confirms that a case study examines a situation in depth, in relation to several variables. The case may be a programme, an event, an activity or a set of individuals bounded in time and place. A case may be selected because of its uniqueness, or used to illustrate an issue. Kumar (2014) notes that a case study design enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context.

Neuman (2014) identifies three types of case studies. *Exploratory case studies* set out to explore any phenomenon in the data which serves as a point of interest to the researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) aver that exploratory case studies are used to explore situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. *Descriptive case studies* describe the natural phenomena which occur within the data in question. Stangor and Walinga (2016) state that descriptive case studies provide a snapshot of the current state of affairs, giving a relatively complete picture of what is occurring at a given time, and allowing the development of questions for further study. They indicate different strategies that may be used by the reader to understand and interpret the descriptive case study. *Explanatory case studies* examine the data closely at both a surface and deep level in order to explain the phenomena in the data (Denzin & Lincoln 2018). Explanatory case studies can also be deployed for casual studies where pattern-matching may be used to investigate certain phenomena in very complex and multivariate cases.

The researcher chose an explanatory design for her case study. She wanted to uncover complex phenomena in the data presented, which gave views and experiences on improving learners' performance in primary schools through curriculum management. Through an explanatory case study, the researcher hoped to find exact explanations of what is happening in schools when curriculum management is practised, and how it is used to improve learners' performance. The case study design was suited because the aim was to gather in-depth and detailed information about a phenomenon. The case study is a useful tool to formulate strategies and understand influences on a phenomenon.

3.3.2.1 Advantages of the case study design

Hayen (2000) attested to the advantages of case studies as follows:

- *Stimulating new research*: A case study can sometimes highlight extraordinary behaviour which can stimulate new research.
- *Contradicting established theory*: Case studies may sometimes contradict established theories.
- *Giving new insight into phenomena or experience*: Case studies can give insight into phenomena because they are so rich in information.
- *Permitting investigation of otherwise inaccessible situations*: Case studies give researchers the possibility to investigate cases which could not possibly be engineered in research laboratories.

Kumar (2014) adds that case studies allow the examination of data which is revealed in context, being embedded in a particular situation and time.

3.3.2.2 Disadvantages of the case study design

Neuman (2014) identifies the following disadvantages of the case study design:

- *Inability to replicate*: The uniqueness of data means that it is valid for only one person or group. The findings cannot be replicated, and some types of reliability measures are very low because relying on one person or group is a weakness in terms of understanding others.
- *Researcher bias*: Researchers who use this design are often accused of bias with regard to the selection of participants, data collection or the way data is interpreted. The researcher's own subjective feelings (researcher bias) may influence the way data is collected.
- *Time intensive*: Case studies are regarded as very time consuming. The data collection process can be intensive and long.
- *Possibility of errors*: Case studies may involve errors of judgment, as one person's perception of the past could be different for another person's. This can and does lead to errors.

3.4 Target population and sampling procedures

The target population of this study comprised fifteen participants: ten Post Level 1

teachers and five departmental heads. Participants were from five different schools, with one departmental head and two Post Level 1 teachers representing each school.

Sampling is the process through which individuals or sampling units are selected from the population (Martinez-Mesa, Gonzalez-Chica, Duquia, Bonamigo & Bastoz, 2016). The importance of sampling is that its considerations help researchers to select sample sizes and sample designs that are most compatible with their research purposes (Omona, 2013). The main aim of this study was to explore how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit, in King Cetshwayo District of KwaZulu-Natal Province. There are five circuits in King Cetshwayo District; namely, Umfolozi, Mthonjaneni, Nkandla, uMhlathuze and uMlalazi. The researcher chose uMhlathuze Circuit because it is close to her own area, and she works in that circuit. Data was thus easily accessible to her. The paragraph below discusses the target population of this study.

The targetd population was primary school Heads of Department (HoDs) and teachers (Post Level 1) in the circuit concerned. Teachers were selected because they implement the curriculum. Their responsibilities include, first, making sure that teaching and learning is taking place, which entails having an understanding of the curriculum to be implemented. Second, they record and report on learners' performance and implement corrective measures to improve performance. Third, they are responsible for curriculum management as it is cascaded down into the classroom.

The head of department, SMT and the principal provide instructional leadership to assist and support the school in realising its goal of attaining optimum academic performance of the learners. While the heads of department were also teachers in this study, they were selected as they were regarded as more knowledgeable in supporting, training and monitoring teaching and learning. Furthermore, heads of department in most rural schools have the same number of subjects as other teachers, and therefore have a deep understanding of learners' daily learning.

Principals were not selected because they rarely teach, spending a great deal of time on other leadership and administrative tasks and responsibilities. They oversee the

whole school in terms of functionality and rarely know exactly what is going on in the classroom, except through reports and discussions at meetings.

The research sample consisted of two teachers and one HoD from each school, with five schools sampled. Greenland (2005) asserts that the target population is an informal one, and is defined as the population about which information is wanted, or the totality of elements which are under discussion, and about which information is sought. The sample is drawn from the population to represent that population.

Participants' profiles are shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Participants' profile

Participant	Highest qualification	Teaching experience in years
T1	Bachelor of Education	07
T2	Bachelor of Education, B. Ed Honours	05
T3	Bachelor of Commerce, PGCE	12
T4	Diploma in Accounting, PGCE	07
T5	National Diploma in Business Management, PGCE	08
T6	Bachelor of Education, M.ed	14
T7	Bachelor of Education, B. Ed Honours	12
T8	Bachelor of Education	06
T9	Secondary Teachers Diploma, ACE, B. Ed Honours	09
T10	Bachelor of Education	08

Table 3.1 shows that all participants had relevant qualification for teaching and all had over five years' experience in teaching. The participants' qualifications and teaching experience gave the impression that they had the necessary knowledge and skills in curriculum and instructional practice, management and monitoring in order to answer the research questions.

There are different types of sampling procedures as revealed by Taherdoost (2016):

- *Probability sampling* means that every item in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. The various kinds of probability sampling are simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and multisampling.
- *Non-probability sampling* or quota sampling is a non-random sampling technique in which participants are chosen on the basis of predetermined characteristics so that the total sample will have the same distribution of characteristics as the wider population. All members of the population do not, therefore, have an equal probability of being included in the sample. Non-probability sampling includes *snowball sampling*, which relies on referrals from initially sampled respondents to other persons believed to have the characteristics of interest (Johnson, Johnson & Johnson, 2014), and *convenience sampling*, which is sampling drawn without any underlying probability-based selection method (Price, 2013). Convenience sampling relies on data that is selected by those who provide it or those who observe it. There is also *purposive sampling*, which this study opted for as the sampling procedure to use.

Purposive sampling is an informant selection tool which is widely used and involves the deliberate choice of informants owing to the qualities they possess (Tongco, 2007). The researcher employed purposive sampling deliberately because she wanted a sample that would best be able to help answer the research questions.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select participants in order to gain an understanding of the central phenomenon, with the assumption that the teachers selected would provide rich information, as they are closely involved in curriculum implementation. Teachers know what is expected from them in terms of curriculum management and learners' performance improvement, as do HoDs. The purposive sampling procedure was used by the researcher in this study in the hope that her sample would enable her to target participants who were familiar with curriculum management.

The HoDs and Post Level 1 teachers constituted a sample of 15 participants from

both rural and township schools. Two schools were located in township areas and the other three were located in rural areas, which meant that six participants were from township schools and nine were from rural schools. Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of the five primary schools according to their availability and accessibility to the researcher. There are 79 primary schools in uMhlathuze circuit, with the researcher selecting five as representative of all.

3.5 Description of data collection instruments

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest in an established, systematic fashion that enables one to answer the research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes (Kabir, 2016). Data collection in the field of education is done in situations that try to reproduce real-life communication scenarios in which participants make oral or written contributions that are useful for research purposes, and at the same time beneficial for their learning process (Canals, 2017).

Fox (2009) states that the quality of data collected in an interview depends on both the interview design and the skills of the interviewer. In the interview process, the researcher frequently asked follow-up questions based on the participants' responses to initial questions. Through the unstructured interviews and document analysis, Research Objectives 1 to 3 were addressed. The interviews allowed the HoDs and teachers to provide clear and detailed information and their personal views regarding curriculum management for improving learners' performance in primary schools. Qualitative interviews afford researchers opportunities to explore, in an in-depth manner, matters that are unique to the experiences of the interviewees, allowing insights into how different phenomena of interest are experienced and perceived (McGrath et al, 2019). This was certainly the case in this study, where interviews yielded a wealth of useful information and insight.

Interviews are conversations for gathering information in research. McGrath, Palmgren and Lilejadahl (2018) argue that interviews are a viable and highly used data collection tool. There are three types of interviews, noted by Jamshed (2014) as

follows: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and structured interviews.

- *Structured interviews* enable the interviewer to ask each respondent the same questions, with interviewees free to respond with the level of depth and freedom with which they wish to respond (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2002). In *structured interviews*, a slightly structured schedule of questions is used; it is very much like a questionnaire.
- *Semi-structured interviews* are in-depth interviews where the respondents have to answer pre-set, open-ended questions, and thus they are widely employed by professionals in their research (Jamshed, 2014). They are conducted once only, with an individual or sometimes within a group. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) state that semi-structured interviews typically consist of a dialogue between researcher and participant, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes and comments.
- *Unstructured interviews* are relatively unstructured, and are more or less equivalent to guided conversations (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Mathers et al. (2002) contend that unstructured interviews are exactly what they sound like; interviews where the interviewer wants to find out about a specific topic, but has no structure or preconceived plan or expectations as to how the interview will proceed.

Unstructured interviews were employed in this study for both teachers and HoDs as they were deemed most useful in terms of establishing rapport with interviewees and in terms of allowing a free-flowing conversation in which the researcher could probe responses and gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher chose unstructured interviews because they allow the interviewee to respond freely with no limitations to the questions.

3.5.1 Unstructured interviews

The researcher explored perceptions of the HoDs and educators in schools about how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in primary schools. The use of unstructured in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to address

Objective 1 of this study. This study is qualitative and used unstructured interviews because they allowed the participants to speak freely without any limitations, in the way they felt was pertinent to the questions. The researcher asked questions which she believed would enrich the data she needed about the research problem at hand. Some of the questions the researcher asked were as follows:

- Are teachers involved in the management of the curriculum in order to improve learners' performance?
- Are you satisfied with the way curriculum management affects learners' performance in your school? Elaborate.
- What are the challenges you experience when managing the curriculum in your school?

A reliable voice recorder was used to record interviews. The researcher was very careful during the interviews because she knew that she had to control and direct the interview flow without getting carried away by the interviewee's input. There was therefore a measure of guidance and control in the interviews, although they remained unstructured.

The researcher used an individual interview approach on the assumption that the interviewees were mature and confident enough to share their views. The HoDs and teachers were professional and familiar with the study topic and were required to respond professionally to the interview questions. The researcher followed the correct procedure, seeking permission from each school to conduct interviews before doing so. The five primary schools were randomly selected from the total number of 79 primary schools in uMhlathuze circuit. She explained the purpose of the research to principals and to interviewees. Consent forms were issued to respondent HoDs and teachers for completion and signing before the actual interview process.

The respondents were sampled because of their clear knowledge of learners in their classrooms, as it is clear that Post Level 1 teachers spend more time with learners than departmental heads do, while the departmental heads were sampled because they spend more time with learners than principals, and also have a greater

understanding of curriculum and management issues than do ordinary teachers. The researcher chose to gather information from only five schools for their availability and ease of access. The researcher carried out the interviews on agreed-to dates using a smart phone to voice-record all the interview proceedings.

3.5.1.1 Advantages of unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews were employed in this study because of their advantages and strengths, which are revealed by Martic (2019) as follows:

- An unstructured interview allows one to enter a particular topic in depth, and to spend whatever time is needed learning about a particular respondent's views and experiences.
- Unstructured interviews are highly flexible, allowing questions to be adapted and changed depending on the interviewee's answers.
- If the interviewer is good at coming up with questions on the spot and making the interviewee feel comfortable, a relaxed atmosphere can be created.
- The general advantages of an interview include that it enables face-to-face contact and behaviour observation. It allows exploration and clarifying of opinions, or dealing with the unexpected; it helps engage participants in the free interviewing process; and helps explore or confirm other data or information from documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Martic, 2019).

3.5.1.2 Disadvantages of unstructured interviews

Since there are disadvantages in every sphere of life, unstructured interviews also have their limitations, which are confirmed by Martic (2019) as follows:

- *Getting distracted during the interview.* Without having questions prepared in advance, the researcher may forget something or miss learning about an important point.
- *Misjudging the interviewee.* The questions may vary greatly from one interviewee to another, which will yield a variety of different data, some of

which may be irrelevant or unable to be used because the researcher is unable to compare it to similar data from another interviewee. It may also become easier to be affected by bias or snap judgments.

- *Interviews can be time-consuming*, and depend on the availability of individuals. In this instance, the researcher had to reschedule many appointments owing to Covid-19 restrictions and protocols.
- *Individuals cannot always identify or express their true views*. Some may use this opportunity to vent frustrations or discuss other issues.
- *Interviewers must be skilled and well prepared*; interviewing many individuals can be time-consuming and expensive, requires careful sampling when dealing with a large population, and interviewers sometimes take over and negatively affect the interview. The researcher had to share the interview guide with participants ahead of time and make them aware of the questions to expect.

Interviews for this study were collected during lockdowns, and several were rescheduled more than once. The researcher brought sanitiser and wet wipes to assure participants of their safety. She also made sure that no one felt compelled to participate if they were unsure or skeptical about these safety protocols.

3.5.2 Document analysis

Document analysis was the second instrument used by the researcher to collect data in this study. Document analysis is a procedure which encompasses the identification, verification and consideration of documents which are related to the object investigated (De Andrade, Schmitt, Storck, Piccoli & Ruoff, 2018). Cardno, Rosales-Anderson and McDonald (2017) recommend the use of multiple methods of data collection in a study because it allows data to be triangulated to provide rigour, since data derived from several sources can be drawn together to strengthen the findings. The researcher employed document analysis as the second instrument to strengthen the findings and provide a measure of triangulation in this study, which enhanced academic rigour.

The researcher sourced documents related to the topic from the participants. These were: Curriculum and Policy Statements (CAPS), Supervision Planner and Tracer, Structuring and Monitoring Conversations, and Jika iMfundo. These are all documents used in South African schools by teachers to manage their daily curriculum work. The researcher used document analysis for the richness of information extracted, and because it broadened her understanding of the investigated problem (De Andrade et al, 2018).

Smulowitz (2017) suggests that the inclusion of documents in a qualitative study can provide additional rich data. Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 156) concur, stating 'documentary data are mostly good sources for qualitative case studies, since they base an inquiry in the perspective of the problem being explored'. Through analysing documents, the qualitative researcher can evaluate their meaning along with other types of data by means of content analysis and constant comparison in order to support the research findings.

The value of using document analysis in this study was that it provided background information before the research project was designed (Owen, 2014). In this study, the CAPS document stipulates the full daily work to be done by teachers, covering what to teach, when. The Supervision Planner and Tracer is used by HoDs to supervise teachers and trace if they are on par with educational standards and expectations. Structuring and Monitoring Conversations was used as it details how the head of department monitors the conversations they have with teachers regarding effective teaching and learning. Jika iMfundo is a curriculum implementation tracker used to improve learners' performance in primary schools, especially in the Foundation Phase.

Documents analysis was appropriate for this study as the documents enabled confirmation of data received through verbal reports obtained from participants during interviews. Documents form an important part of any social scientific research project. In approaching documents as a field for research, the researcher needs to keep in mind the dynamic involved in the relationships between production, consumption and content (Owen, 2014).

3.5.2.1 Advantages of document analysis

Document analysis, like all other research data collection instruments, has advantages and disadvantages. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Training Needs Assessment (2015) revealed the following advantages of document analysis:

- Documents use existing information; they are not influenced by changes or unforeseen circumstances.
- They are unobtrusive. There is no need to disrupt work underway; they allow identifying of job performance standards that can be applied locally; they can provide leads to explore or people to interview.
- They can provide historical perspective to better understand current events and consider both internal and external information.

Owen (2014) asserts that other advantages of document analysis are as follows:

- Documents form a field of research in their own right, and should not be considered as mere props for action.
- They need to be considered as situated products; they are produced in social settings, and are always to be regarded as collective products, determining how they are consumed and used in organised settings.

3.5.2.2 Disadvantages of document analysis

The following are limitations of document analysis in research, as revealed by the ICAO Needs Assessment (2015).

- Documents are not always good sources of information. Better documents with rich information may not be available or shared.
- It can be time consuming to review all documents.
- Information may be inapplicable, disorganised, unavailable, or outdated, and could be biased because of selective survival of information.
- Information may be incomplete or inaccurate, and it can be time consuming to collect, review and analyse many documents.

3.6 Piloting of data collection instruments

Pre-testing of the data collection instrument is highly regarded as an effective technique for improving validity in qualitative data collection procedures and the interpretation of findings (Hurst, Arulogun, Owalabi & Akinyemi, 2015). The pre-test allows the researcher to self-correct between design and implementation, to ensure the best opportunity for attaining reliability and rigour in qualitative inquiry and analysis. Owen (2014) avers that pre-testing provides an opportunity to make revisions to study material and data collection procedures to ensure that appropriate questions are being asked, and that questions do not make respondents uncomfortable. Sometimes an interview schedule may cover two or more important issues in a single question, which can be problematic, and can be rectified during the pre-test.

The researcher did the pre-testing in schools which were not part of the study sample and with three teachers who were also not part of the study sample. The planned interview guide was used to direct these interviews. The pre-test allowed the researcher to address ambiguity, repetition and the language of the questions, where lack of clarity was revealed.

Piloting for interviews is an integral aspect of research and useful in the process of conducting qualitative research, as it highlights possible problems with the interview questions or techniques. The pilot study also gives insight pertaining to the findings of the study (Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Halim, Lim & Yusof, 2017). The responses by pre-test interviewees gave a sense of understanding of the kinds of responses to expect from the participants of the main study.

The researcher discussed the responses from the pilot participants with her supervisor who helped check the sequencing of the questions and possible follow-up questions that could be asked. The piloting of the instrument was in effect a rehearsal, and gave the researcher confidence to ask questions and probe further. Castillo-Montoya (2016) states that piloting of the interview questions is important as it assists the researcher to adjust questions and the interview guide before embarking

on the major study. In addition, the piloting of interview questions helped confirm the choice of participants selected by means of purposive sampling, as explained in Section 3.4 of this study.

In the pilot interviews, participants responded very well, which suggested that the actual sample would be comfortable during the intended interviews, and that all questions in the interview schedule were slightly re-worded as a result of a test.

3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis refers to a variety of specific procedures and methods. It involves analyzing the goals, relationships, decision making and ideas of some individuals (Richmond, 2006). Richmond (2006) discusses the value and purpose of data analysis as follows:

Data analysis provides information on individuals from a variety of different backgrounds and levels of prior experience; it creates a value-added framework that presents strategies, concepts, procedures, methods and techniques in the context of the real life examples; and data analysis provides opportunities to reduce the burden.

File et al. (2017) state that data analysis is the part of research during which the data gets interpreted and then converted into findings. In this study, data analysis was conducted after all the interviews and document analysis were complete. The researcher opted for qualitative analysis because her study is qualitative, and the approach allowed her to use the 'why', 'what' and 'how' questions that yield in-depth answers. The researcher wanted to know what models were used by curriculum leaders in schools to manage the curriculum, why these models were suitable for their curriculum management, and how they managed their curriculum in order to improve learners' performance. For these objectives, a qualitative design and form of analysis were ideal. Once the researcher had collected data, she transcribed the recordings of the interviews. Thematic analysis was then conducted, and is discussed below.

3.7.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within

data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) define thematic analysis as the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. It minimally organises and describes the researcher's data set in detail, and it interprets various aspects of the research topic. Alhojailan (2012) confirms that thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis which is used to analyse classifications and present themes or patterns that relate to the data. Thematic analysis helps group units of detailed data into meaningful categories so that it can be more easily understood. It is considered the most appropriate process for any study that seeks to discover meaning through interpreting the content of interviews or focus groups. Braun and Clarke (2006) contend that the value of thematic analysis is that it provides a systematic element to data analysis, and allows the researcher to associate the frequency of a theme with the whole content. Thematic analysis makes the researcher's work relatively easy.

3.7.2 Steps in thematic analysis

When analysing qualitative data using any method, there are steps that need to be considered. Thematic analysis comprises six steps, which guided the process of analysis in this study. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) and Akinyode and Khan (2018) identify these six steps in analysing data, as follows:

- *Become familiar with the data.* This is the first step in qualitative analysis, which includes reading and rereading the transcripts. The researcher should be very familiar with the entire body of data before going further.
- *Generate initial codes.* In this phase, the researcher should start organising the data in a meaningful and systematic way. Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning. There are different ways to code, and the method is determined by the researcher's perspective and research questions.
- *Search for themes.* A theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data or research question. For this reason, there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2016). In short, a theme is characterised by its significance.

- *Review themes.* In this step, researchers review, modify and develop the preliminary themes that were identified in the third step. Themes are reviewed with the purpose of seeing if they make sense. Themes should also be coherent and distinct from each other. The following points should be considered in this fourth step: Do the themes make sense? Does the data support the themes? Is the researcher trying to fit too much into a theme? If themes overlap, are they really separate themes? Are there themes within themes (subthemes)? Are there other themes within the data?
- *Define themes.* This step is the final refinement of the themes, where the aim is to identify the essence of what each theme is about. It clarifies what the theme says, indicates if there are subthemes, how they interact with and relate to the main theme, and how the themes relate to each other.
- *Writing up.* This is the end-point of research, which is usually a report, often a journal article, dissertation or thesis. Writing up involves giving meaning and intent to action and reading.

3.8 Issues of trustworthiness

The trustworthiness or rigour of a study refers to the degree of confidence that a reader may have in the data, its interpretation, and the methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Connelly, 2016). In each study, it is advised that researchers establish the protocols and procedures necessary for the study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers. Validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study (Sharma, 2009). If the results can be sustained several times using the same methodology and instruments, it is then considered reliable.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p. 91) define reliability and validity in a qualitative research study as the degree of congruence between explanations of the phenomena and realities of the world.

Reliability is a concept used for testing or evaluating qualitative research, and is

viewed as a way of information elicitation (Golafshani, 2003). McDonald, Schoenebeck and Forte (2019) view reliability as broadly describing the extent to which results are reproducible from one test to another or between two judges of behaviour. To ensure reliability in qualitative research, an examination of trustworthiness is crucial (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). The researcher used reliability measures to test the quality and truthfulness of her study, and to generate understanding. The recording device captured interviewees' responses verbatim and the researcher made notes to fill in observations and to summarise each point as it was being made. This assisted with verifying exactly what had been said. In addition, at the end of each interview, participants were asked to check that the notes had recorded their meaning clearly. Synthesis and interpretation were supported by the recordings of verbatim statements.

Zohrabi (2013) confirms that reliability deals with the consistency, dependability and replicability of data obtained from a piece of research. In this case, the human instrument was reliable, owing to training and practice. It was easy to check the notes and ask follow-up questions, unlike where a questionnaire is used on its own. The human instrument is able to communicate at any time, unlike the man-made instrument that is merely operated by humans.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is the equivalent of internal validity, and is concerned with the aspect of truth-value. It is considered one of the most important indicators of quality in qualitative research (Liao, 2015; Korsteins & Moser, 2016). There are strategies to ensure credibility, one of which is prolonged engagement, where the researcher spends adequate time to learn about the context in which the research is conducted, builds trust, and reflects on potential distortions of meaning that may creep in during contact between researcher and participants. Amin, Nørgaard, Cavaco and Desselle (2020) also mention persistent observation, triangulation and member checking as ways to ensure credibility. Another is to consider a real or hypothetical person who has the problem which the study addresses. In this way, the researcher ensures that the study's findings are linked with reality, which helps to demonstrate their truth and accuracy. The researcher also ensured that study participants had sufficient

background information about the project, signed consent forms and understood the interview protocol.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability is a type of external validity which refers to the degree to which the phenomena or findings described in one study are applicable or useful to theory, practice and future research (Moon, Brewer, Januchoski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016). Transferability refers to the potential for extrapolation; it relies on the reasoning that findings can be generalised or transferred to other settings or groups (Elo, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014). Cobb and Forbes (2002) contend that transferability means that in the final report, the investigator provides sufficient description of the context of the study so that the reader can make a judgment as to whether the findings may be applicable or transferable to another similar context. The researcher applied the results of the pre-testing to the responses of the final, targeted participants. She noted the specifics of the research situation in the pilot study and compared them to the specifics of the environment of the final study, and found that they were similar.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which similar findings would be obtained if the study were repeated (Mabuza, Govender, Ogunbanjo & Mash, 2014). With dependability in qualitative research, the focus is on the range of experience rather than the average experience. Dependability is linked to both credibility and confirmability (Kennedy-Clarke, 2012). A researcher can establish dependability if the work is repeated in the same context with the same methods, and with the same participants, and similar results are obtained. In this study, the researcher has given sufficient details in the research report to ensure that similar or consistent findings would be found if the research were carried out in a similar setting. The best way to support dependability of the research is to ensure that the methods are described in sufficient detail so that the research could be replicated by someone else (Cobb & Forbes, 2002).

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree of objectivity of the researcher in data collection and reporting (Mabuza, et al., 2014). It can be helpful to confirm the researcher's interpretation of the findings with the respondents. The reader wants to ensure that the results are truly based on the data, and not on the characteristics or preferences of the researcher. Confirmability is enhanced through triangulation and journal keeping on the part of the researcher, in which the researcher records feelings, reactions to phenomena observed, and self-reflection on changing preconceptions (Cobb & Forbes, 2002). This helps to manage and bracket bias. The researcher should preserve all records and documents used or produced during qualitative research, including interviews conducted. This was done in the current research.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Approval was granted to the researcher to conduct the research by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Education (see Appendix F). The University of Zululand Ethics Committee also approved the research (see Appendix D for the Ethical Clearance Certificate). The researcher read the University of Zululand's policy and procedures on research ethics, and its policy and procedures on managing and preventing acts of plagiarism as per its research ethics guide (2015), and ensured that she abided by these stipulations.

The participants were made aware that participation in the study was voluntary, that they were not obliged to be interviewed, and that they were free to withdraw at any time should they wish to do so. The reason for the study and the procedure for collecting data from them was clearly explained in advance. They were assured that their participation would be anonymous, and that pseudonyms would be used, in acknowledgement of the ethical principle of anonymity in research.

Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles (2006) affirm that to assure someone of confidentiality and anonymity means that what has been discussed will not be repeated, or at least, not without permission. The researcher kept all her participants' unknown in order to protect them from any harmful consequences of sensitive or negative findings and the stigmatisation of their institutions and/or communities. All

participants were fully aware that their confidentiality was to be protected during and after the study was conducted, and even when the information is published.

All participants were given informed consent forms, identified by Denzin and Lincoln (2018) as an essential and legal requirement in research involving human subjects. Informed consent relates to giving information to the participants and the research study in clear terms. The researcher informed all participants of the purpose, data collection methods and the extent of the study before the interviews took place. The participants read and signed their consent forms (see Appendix C).

3.10 Limitations of the study

Study limitations represent weaknesses in a research design that may influence the outcomes and conclusions of the research (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). Researchers have an obligation to the academic community to present the complete and honest limitations of a presented study. The goal of presenting limitations is to provide meaningful information to the reader. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) confirm that the limitations of a study concern the weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher's control, and are closely associated with the chosen research design, statistical model constraints, or other factors. In this study, the researcher acknowledges that this study was limited to uMhlathuze Circuit Management in the King Cetshwayo District in the Northern Zululand area of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Out of five circuits – uMlalazi, uMhlathuze, Umfolozi, Nkandla and Mthonjaneni – only uMhlathuze was targeted for the study, and the sample was limited to the five primary schools in this circuit. Hence, it would not be appropriate to generalise the findings of the study. Despite these limitations, the sample was considered large enough to generate findings of interest to educational stakeholders and other researchers.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has described and discussed the research methodology adopted in this study to investigate the role of curriculum management in improving learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit in the King Cetshwayo District. In discussing the research methodology, the following aspects were taken into

account: the research paradigm, the research design, sampling procedures, the research instrument, data analysis and presentation, issues of trustworthiness, the limitations of the study, its reliability and ethical considerations.

The following chapter presents the results, and an analysis and interpretation thereof.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the research methodology. This chapter presents the findings and an analysis of the data. Data was generated using interviews and document analysis, as indicated in Chapter Three. The researcher used unstructured interviews and document analysis when collecting data from the HoDs and teachers from the targeted schools. In this chapter, data analysis from interviews is presented according to themes and subthemes, and a presentation is given on documents analysed. The qualitative method used entailed presenting non-numerical data in the form of text.

Revisiting the research questions, aims and objectives of this study served as a point of departure in analysis, as it assisted the researcher to focus on themes that aligned with the objectives. The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- How does curriculum management improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit Management?
- Can learner performance be affected by issues of curriculum management in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit?
- What challenges in curriculum management are experienced by the schools or educators in their quest to improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit?
- What model of curriculum management may be adopted and used to improve learner performance in primary schools?

Data analysis is presented under three themes based on the following objectives of the study, which were:

- to investigate how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit;
- to determine how curriculum management affects learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit;
- to establish curriculum management challenges faced by schools and educators in their quest to improve learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit; and
- to propose a model for curriculum management that can be used to improve learners' performance in primary schools.

4.2. Description of participants

Teachers

Ten teachers from five different primary schools formed part of the sample. They revealed the challenges experienced by themselves and by the schools in the management of the curriculum. All the interviewed teachers seemed comfortable and eager to share their views regarding curriculum management in the primary schools in which they worked. In this regard, teachers were selected according to their qualifications and work experience. Table 4.1 below illustrates the post levels and years of teaching experience of the teachers.

Table 4.1: Highest professional qualification and experience level among teachers

Participant	Highest qualification	Teaching experience in years
T1	Bachelor of Education	07
T2	Bachelor of Education, B. Ed Honours	05
T3	Bachelor of Commerce, PGCE	12
T4	Diploma in Accounting, PGCE	07
T5	National Diploma in Business Management, PGCE	08

T6	Bachelor of Education, Master's Degree in Education	14
T7	Bachelor of Education, B. Ed Honours	12
T8	Bachelor of Education	06
T9	Secondary Teachers Diploma, ACE, B. Ed Honours	09
T10	Bachelor of Education	08

Departmental heads

Five departmental heads were selected as part of the sample in this study. These departmental heads were selected from five different schools, so that each school was represented by one departmental head. All the departmental heads were selected owing to their expertise in the field of education. Table 4.2 illustrates the post levels and years of teaching experience of the HoDs.

Table 4.2: Highest professional qualification and experience level among HODs

Participant	Highest qualification	Teaching and managing the curriculum in years
HoD 1	Bachelor of Education, PGCE	12
HoD 2	National Diploma in Taxation, PGCE	15
HoD 3	Bachelor of Education	21
HoD 4	Bachelor of Education, ACE, B. Ed Honours	26
HoD 5	Bachelor of Education	27

The information in Table 4.1. and Table 4.2 is important, as it establishes that the participants were knowledgeable in their field and a worthy sample for yielding information about curriculum management in their schools.

The following section discusses the data that emerged from interviews in light of the objectives of the study.

4.3 Emergent themes

Table 4.3. below presents the themes and subthemes that emerged from the

participants' responses. Three themes and fourteen sub-themes emerged from the data.

The researcher used the pseudonyms School A to School E for schools, HoD1 to HoD5 for HoDs; and T1 to T10 for Post Level 1 teachers in order to keep participants' identities confidential. The analysis of responses was conducted according to themes and sub-themes that emerged during data analysis.

Table 4.3: Themes and sub-themes that emerged from data

Themes	Sub-themes
4.3.1. Teachers' involvement in curriculum management	4.3.1.1. Teachers' roles in curriculum management 4.3.1.2. Objectives for improving learners' performance through curriculum management 4.3.1.3. Learner progress from grade to grade.
4.3.2. Strategies to improve curriculum management	4.3.2.1. New strategies for improving learners' performance 4.3.2.2. Revisiting the model in use.
4.3.3. Challenges in curriculum management	4.3.3.1. Performance of learners with different needs 4.3.3.2. Classroom management 4.3.3.3. School management 4.3.3.4. Overcrowded classrooms 4.3.3.5. Lack of parental involvement 4.3.3.6. Lack of learner participation 4.3.3.7. Shortage of LTSM and relevant policy documents to improve learners' performance through curriculum management

4.3.1 Teachers' involvement in curriculum management

Teachers' involvement in curriculum management is defined by Alsubae (2016) as the most important part as they are only curriculum implementers with their knowledge, experiences and competencies. All the participants complained that teachers are not involved in curriculum management, even though teachers are the implementers of the curriculum. This concurs with the findings of Ramparsad (2001), who states that teacher need to be involved in curriculum management as they have to define the aim, identify content, and organise teaching and assessment. The

importance of teachers' involvement in curriculum management is based on their deep knowledge of what is happening in the schools regarding teaching and learning. Teacher involvement in curriculum management process is very important for aligning the content of the curriculum with the needs of learners (Asubaie, 2016). All the participants complained that teachers are not involved in curriculum management, even though teachers are the implementers of the curriculum. This is what they had to say:

HoD 2, School A:

'Teachers are not involved in curriculum management; only the SMT meets and monitors the work without involving the teachers in the process. Teachers are only left outside to manage classrooms.'

HoD 2, School A also complained that because teachers are not involved in curriculum management, they can end up having a negative influence on learners' performance. The participant felt that teachers should be involved owing to their day-to-day experiences with learners.

'I think teachers need to be involved in curriculum management, because they are the ones to implement what is planned on curriculum matters. There should be some teachers working with the curriculum managers and developers to have the teachers' voice heard.'

Another participant also insisted that teachers are not involved in curriculum management, but are only given instructions as to what is expected by their superior.

HoD 4, School D said:

'To be honest, teachers are not involved in the management of the curriculum; I personally feel that this is not fair to both teachers and learners because teachers are the agents of the curriculum. They are the ones close to learners, and learners receive academic information from them. Teachers are faced with delivering information they are not part and parcel of.'

T7, School D concurred that teachers are not involved in curriculum management, but are only given instructions from the outcomes of the SMT's decisions.

'Teachers are given instructions on what is expected of them only in terms of curriculum implementation and classroom management. Their importance in curriculum management is overlooked.'

T8, School D added:

'Teachers are told what to do or just given documents with instructions of what to do and/or changes regarding the curriculum implementation; also when to complete those curriculum expectations.'

T1, School A confirmed that they are ignored as teachers when it comes to curriculum management processes.

'We as teachers (Post Level 1) are not involved when it comes to curriculum management issues. At the end of the day, we are supposed to produce the best marks and wonders for learners, but we are not involved in curriculum management in our school.'

T2, School A said that their voice is not heard or considered, and schools are not doing well, resulting in their being considered as underperforming schools.

'Our voice is not considered. As a result there is still the issue of underperforming schools under the circuit targeted. Teachers are only thought of when things go wrong, and there is a need for shifting the blame, only because there is somebody to be blamed outside there.'

T2 School A went on to say that teachers are the only curriculum implementers in schools, which means that they should be given a chance to voice their views.

'Teachers are the only curriculum implementers in schools, so they need to be involved in any curriculum actions. They know exactly how to handle learners, where they need support, and more.'

T3, School B revealed that there is some degree of teacher involvement in the curriculum management in their school.

'Yes, there is a little teacher involvement, which is also not satisfactory because the SMT only needs teachers' input when things seem to be getting

out of hand. There are head teachers in schools; their role is not even noticed in schools by their superiors.'

T6, School C had the same view as T3, School B. She indicated that teachers are involved to some extent in curriculum management, but only when things go wrong.

'Yes, but teachers are only considered after a particular problem is noted involved in the curriculum management of our school; only involved when there is a serious issue pertaining to new information. They are then invited to discuss minor issues; otherwise, they are not.'

The above response show that teachers are not or very minimally involved in curriculum management, and are not happy about this. Teachers could contribute a great deal if they were invited to collaboratively and effectively work with curriculum designers and managers.

Alsubaie (2016) confirms that teachers should be involved in curriculum management processes for schools to be successful. The success of the curriculum depends on the ability of teachers to understand the curriculum as a whole – that is, curriculum changes, management and development, since they deal with the curriculum daily (Mandukwini, 2016). However, the findings seem to show an assumption on the part of managers or department officials that teachers lack a thorough understanding of what curriculum management is about. In practice, planning instructional processes, using resources, engaging with parents, and attending workshops, phase meetings and department meetings are all part of curriculum management, yet are not acknowledged as such. Teachers should be involved in curriculum management more formally, so as to exercise their professional autonomy in curriculum decision making, which would enhance the effectiveness of the learning and teaching process during implementation.

The most important person in the curriculum implementation process is the teacher, with his or her knowledge, experience and competencies (Alsubaie, 2016). Teachers are central to any curriculum development effort. Better teachers support better learning because they are knowledgeable about teaching practice and responsible for introducing the curriculum in the classroom. The findings also concur with those of

Maphalala et al (2018), who state that the role of teachers in curriculum management is to ensure that quality teaching and learning is provided.

Based on the findings, it is clear that teachers play an integral part in the process of developing and managing the curriculum, but informally and in a way that is not acknowledged. This finding concurs with that of Ramparsad (2001), who states that in curriculum management, teachers are responsible for the following:

- identifying the aims and objectives of the curriculum;
- selecting topics to be learned;
- organising and sequencing the content; and
- evaluating the selected content.

Teachers are the individuals directly involved in the learners' instruction; they know and understand their learners and their needs, and how to deal with them in their diversity. It would therefore be wise to involve teachers in curriculum management processes in schools. However, the findings revealed that teachers are not sufficiently involved. They are left outside the planning process, required to manage classrooms, and given instructions; their voice is not heard except when there is a serious issue of new information that has to be incorporated.

The following paragraphs discuss the three sub-themes that emerged under this theme.

4.3.1.1 Teachers' roles in curriculum implementation

This is the second theme. Teachers' roles in curriculum implementation comprise delivering the curriculum to learners as expected by the Department of Basic Education and the community. Their role is crucial in curriculum management owing to their knowledge of the learners in their classrooms. Teachers know their learners better than others involved in the curriculum process. They can also give insight into the types of materials, activities and skills that need to be incorporated in conveying the curriculum at different stages of its implementation.

Most of the participants revealed that teachers are central to everyday curriculum implementation; they know its challenges and should be prioritised in implementing it. They are the main educational roleplayers in learners' lives, and the nation builders. Oloruntegbe (2011) states that a well-planned curriculum is crucial, as there is a gap between the curriculum that is developed and the curriculum that is actually implemented. This suggests that participants might be struggling with curriculum implementation in their classrooms, possibly owing to the fact that aspects of it are unsuited to classroom realities and learners' levels of academic attainment. Alsubaie (2016) expresses the same sentiment, emphasising that the level of teacher involvement in curriculum management affects the achievement of educational reform. Teachers are well placed to be able to align the content of curriculum with needs in the classroom. However, for that to occur, the curriculum needs to take cognisance of learners' abilities, contexts, experiences and skill levels. Chaudhary (2015) confirms that the curriculum implementation process involves helping learners to acquire the knowledge and experience that leads to nation building.

HoD 3, School C thought that teachers are central to everyday curriculum implementation. He felt that they know very well how to interact with learners, and how and when to deliver the curriculum.

HoD 4, School D highlighted that teachers know the challenges and the successes of curriculum implementation from their experiences in the classroom.

'Teachers play a vital role in curriculum management, as it is well known that they are the only curriculum implementers; they know the challenges and the successes of the curriculum being implemented for learners. Teachers know when a learner is ready for progression, not only from grade to grade, but also from their level of development.'

T1, School A added that teachers experience challenges in curriculum implementation:

'Sometimes the HoDs, principals and the Department itself are not happy about their work. Also learners being careless about their schoolwork is a huge challenge; but it becomes a great success whenever they consider their

lessons positively.'

T5, School C confirmed the centrality of teachers in the learning process, owing to the familiarity with learners and their priorities.

'What they say, wear and how they behave matters to learners. Teachers are at the heart of both education and learners. Without teachers there would be no teaching and learning. The Department of Education needs teachers to lead learners to their future, and learners depend on the presence of teachers for their success.'

T9, School E felt strongly that what was expected of teachers was unfair.

'Teachers should not be just the curriculum implementers because they are not in the management of the curriculum. They should not play the vital role in the curriculum implementation process because it is not fair to implement something managed by others while you are there.'

Most participants believed that the role teachers play in curriculum implementation is vitally important as they build the nation by implementing the curriculum, which is a national mandate.

T3, School B made the point that teachers are indispensable in shaping the nation and therefore deserves more of a say in what is taught:

'Teachers are nation builders – the world depends on them because teaching is the mother of all professions. For one to talk and practise some sense, a teacher is responsible for that. A teacher is capable of changing the world. What a teacher says matters. Teachers' voices should be considered because learners' performance can be changed by their actions in the classrooms.'

T 7, School D reiterated this point:

'The role of the teachers goes a long way in the people's progress. Teachers prepare learners to be independent and able to face the world without fear

when they are adults. Learners' behaviours are changed by teachers in the classrooms and other school settings. Nowadays, we have a number of professions emanating from teachers' hands. So, teachers are indeed playing the most important role in nation building.'

According to the participants, teachers should be considered and listened to because they are the only curriculum implementers. The above evidence from participants shows the role of the teacher in managing the curriculum. The literature supports the finding that the teacher's role in managing the curriculum is central and that teachers affect the learning process by managing instruction, and collaborating with and reporting to school leadership. Alsubaie (2016) confirms that curriculum management should be viewed as a process by which learners' needs are met and improvements are made in their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Nhlanzi (2018) emphasises that teachers have many roles to play in curriculum management. They are supposed to share their planning, play active roles, examine, evaluate and help shape the curriculum. Oloruntegbe (2011) agrees that while teachers are recognised as sole implementers of curricula change, they receive little or no orientation regarding these changes.

Teachers know their learners better than anyone involved in the curriculum process. The main complaint of the teachers was that they are hardly involved in the development process of the curriculum or its management. The importance of the role of teachers is confirmed by Alsubaie (2016), who states that in order for curriculum management to be effective in schools, teachers must be involved in curriculum management processes.

4.3.1.2 Objectives for improving learners' performance through curriculum management

Objectives are clear and specific statements of what learners will be able to do or achieve by the end of a lesson or section of the curriculum. Setting objectives and providing feedback work in tandem. To measure performance, teachers need to identify success criteria for learning objectives so that learners know when they have achieved those objectives. The standards for improvements in learners' performance

need to be made clear and specific, through the formulation of specific objectives. Learners should be aware of what those objectives are in order for them to work hard and fulfill what the objectives contain. Scholar (2018) states that to improve learner performance on a national scale, the provincial Departments of Education should pay attention to improving curriculum management and coverage. The success of a school is measured against how the school manages its teaching processes, which include curriculum management.

Some participants stated that teachers entering classrooms should have clear learning objectives that help groom learners for the future, and that they should let learners know the objectives set for them before the class begins. They should collaborate with HoDs, and lead learners to the point where they become independent citizens.

This is how **T2, School A** responded regarding the objectives for improving learners' performance through curriculum management:

'To improve learners' performance, it is wise to let them know about the objectives set for them to achieve at the end of the lesson, also in their real-life situations after their schooling. All the objectives must be vivid to both learners and teachers.'

HoD 2, School A said:

'For the learners' performance to be improved, the HODs should work in collaboration with the teachers, especially when designing the learning objectives. Those learning objectives should even prepare learners to be independent from their schooling time to their adulthood. By so doing, the school might have a good name because of the learners' performance being improved through the positive objectives.'

T4, School B recognised the value of clear objectives and concurred that these ought to be made known to the learners to improve their performance:

'It is always obvious that objectives set by teachers when planning their

teaching work are for improving learners' performance. It is every teacher's dream to have smart learners who are capable in almost every lesson they are taught. Encouraging learners to be able to achieve the objectives set for them can help improve their performance. For learners to succeed, all the objectives should be clarified to them.'

HoD 4, School D drew attention to the long-term objective of teaching, and the value of clear communication between educational stakeholders regarding the setting of objectives:

'All the departmental stakeholders should have the same objectives when it comes to learners. Those objectives of curriculum management should be set to improve learners' performance. The main aim of curriculum management is to uplift the community or the nation through education, so all the objectives should prepare learners to be independent citizens.'

T8, School D spoke about how clear objectives can motivate both learners and teachers.

'Curriculum management objectives are the key element of learners' performance. They give a lead to both teachers and learners, because teachers teach with enthusiasm with such goals in their minds, and learners learn with full understanding of what is expected of them. In this way, learners are motivated and always learn for a purpose, not only to pass to the next grade but also to fulfill their dreams.'

T9, School E elucidated how clear objectives make teaching and easier:

'As a teacher, it is very nice to see your learners progressing from grade to grade. That alone shows that teachers' work is positive. All teachers' wish is to have a good name through their hard work. Setting objectives that are achievable is their priority when it comes to learners' performance improving. Clear objectives make the teachers' and learners' work easy.'

Participants' comments show that the long-term and immediate objective of teaching

should always be kept uppermost in the minds of teachers, and that they should make these objectives clear to learners. Objectives are embedded in the curriculum. Wijngaards-de Meij and Merx (2018) content that alignment between teaching practice and curriculum objectives is essential for realising the overall goals of teaching. Participants were of the opinion that if teachers were able to understand and interpret the curriculum management objectives, as the key component of instructional processes, it would lead to improved learner performance. This point came across clearly. Curriculum management objectives should be considered in teaching because they are aligned to the curriculum itself. Without the proper objectives, it is impossible for learners' performance to improve. Teachers are aware of the need for clear objectives, but are currently not aligning classroom objectives with curriculum objectives because they are not entirely familiar with the thinking behind the curriculum. If they were more involved in its design and were consulted in its management, they might embed curriculum goals more explicitly in their teaching.

4.3.1.3 Learner progress from grade to grade

Learner progress from grade to grade is the purposeful sequencing of teaching and learning expectations across multiple developmental stages, ages, or grade levels (Ngema, 2016). Volmink (2015) states that learners whose educators have high expectations receive more positive non-verbal communication from their teachers, which includes smiles, nods and eye-contact, which helps them to perform better and thus progress smoothly from grade to grade. Such learners receive more opportunities to master new and challenging learning content than those whose educators have low expectations.

Learner progress is normally accelerated by the teacher when he or she encourages learners to their best, no matter what the situation. For learners to progress from grade to grade, an educator should put in the required effort (Oloruntegbe, 2011). As the participants in this study made clear, it is every teacher's wish to see their learners progress from grade to grade, and beyond. The findings of the study reveal that most participants found it satisfying to see younger learners being admitted to higher classes, progressing as their performance improved. They rejoiced in seeing learners progress, discussing objectives with other learners and achieving

the objectives set.

HoD 1, School A illustrated this point:

'It is so interesting seeing the little ones being admitted to our school to Grade R, then moving to Grade 1 and upwards. Their progress from grade to grade is every educational stakeholder's concern. Seeing them grow, learn and progress from grade to grade is one of our biggest objectives. Progressing from this grade to another grade means that their cognitive level grows, too.'

T1, School A pointed out that progress from grade to grade was evidence that improvements were being made:

'Whenever we teach our learners, we like to see them progress from this grade to another grade. When they progress to the next grades, we welcome the other learners to the new grades the others have moved from. Progression of learners from grade to grade means learners' performance is improving.'

HoD 2, School B concurred with the above, pointing out how setting objectives helped learners progress from grade to grade.

'To be honest, seeing our learners progress from grade to grade means that this objective was achieved. This shows that it is important to set achievable goals. Learners' progress relies on the objectives set for them for their learning. When the teachers set clear goals to be achieved by learners, it becomes clear for them too to pursue those goals.'

T4 School B also drew attention to the importance of objectives in helping learners progress through the grades.

'Schools should set clear objectives for all learners to improve their performance in order for them to progress from one grade to another at the due time or year. Discussing objectives with learners as the expectations and

or outcomes at the end of their learning helps in improving their performance.'

T5, School C responded similarly.

'Our learners depend on us as their teachers in preparing them to move from grade to grade. The objectives we plan for them should be simple when we discuss them with them. It is crucial for learners to know what is expected of them to have achieved at the end of their learning. That alone prepares them for the next grade.'

Teachers should always have strategic plans when setting the objectives, and teach learners in a way that improves their performance with progress in mind. Discussion of the objectives by the teacher with the learners helps them to understand what is expected of them after their learning. Dean et al. (2012) argue that teachers need to identify success criteria for learning objectives, so that learners know when they have achieved those objectives. It is clear that the process of setting learning objectives begins with knowing the specific standards, benchmarks and support knowledge that learners are required to learn.

T6, School C agreed that discussing objectives with learners could help them improve their performance.

'When learners progress from grade to grade without extra intervention, like being condoned, it means that their work was satisfactory. Learners' readiness to be promoted to the next grade means that the objectives set for their learning were in order and clear to them. It is wise to discuss what learners are expected to achieve or able to do or know by the end of their learning.'

HoD 4, School D referred to meetings held between for teachers and HoDs for discussing the objectives that would help learners prepare for their future:

'We as the heads of departments meet with teachers and discuss the objectives they will set for learners. The reason for this meeting is to make sure teachers and their superiors in schools are on the same page; learners' performance should be improved through the well-set objectives. Such

objectives would be achieved by seeing learners progress from grade to grade and beyond.'

T7, School D concurred on the importance of objectives for learner progress, and reiterated that these should be discussed not just among teachers but with learners, too.

'Learners' performance could be improved by setting relevant objectives for their learning. The objectives should be discussed with them in order to help them progress from grade to grade and even beyond. Progressing from grade to grade and beyond is the objective that easily indicates that the teaching and learning was effective.'

The findings of the study reveal that setting learning objectives is important, because objectives give an indication of what is expected from learners and teachers. Most participants thought that discussion of objectives with learners helped to improve their performance.

The findings suggest that learners' readiness to be promoted to the next grade is enhanced when teachers set clear objectives with them and hold high expectations of them. Performance should be aligned with clear objectives. This is aligned with Tayler's 1949 model, as explained by James (2012). Whenever learners pass, both the teacher and parents are happy. It is very pleasing to see a learner progress from grade to grade. It shows that they are benefiting from what they have been taught in their classrooms. Reed (2015) concurs that clearly communicating learning objectives supports learners' learning and positive behaviour. It would be difficult for learners to achieve the learning objectives if they are not aware of them.

Learners' progress from grade to grade indicates that there is an improvement in their learning. When the curriculum is well managed, it gives positive results. Explaining learning objectives to learners also makes the work of teachers easier.

The theme was about the teachers' role, the role of objectives in boosting learner performance through curriculum management and learner progress from grade to grade. Concerning the teachers' role, it was specified that teachers implement a

curriculum that has been planned by others – the curriculum managers and planners. Their own voices are not heard at the planning stage. Many teachers felt this was a grave error and hampered quality of teaching. To enhance learners' performance through curriculum management, the curriculum should be managed effectively through the involvement of the correct parties for the benefit of learners.

It was also shown that setting and conveying clear objectives helps learners know and understand what is expected of them. Learner progress from grade to grade is important to teachers, and makes them feel happy as they see learners they teach progress to higher grades. To teachers, learners' progress suggests that the teacher's work was well done.

Strategies to improve curriculum management are discussed below.

4.3.2 Strategies to improve curriculum management

This is the third theme. Participants stated that schools need to employ strategies that will help their learners improve their performance, otherwise learners suffer and schools come to be regarded as underperforming schools. Participants emphasised that schools need strategies that can act as guidelines, and that they may differ from school to school. They also strengthen teamwork and promote effective teaching and learning. Safitri et al. (2020) state that curriculum management strategies are essentially patterns of behaviour that serve as guidelines for action, and using them in an activity can result in greater efficiency and productivity. They will differ from school to school, and even from teacher to teacher.

HoD 1, School A commented:

'Each and every school needs to have a curriculum management strategy or strategies that it uses as its guideline for managing the curriculum positively. We use some strategies in our curriculum management. We find those curriculum models very useful in achieving our goals as a school.'

HoD 2, School B thought that strategies differ from school to school:

'Curriculum management strategies differ from school to school, so we are aware that the curriculum management strategy we have in our school is totally different from other schools. We decided on the strategy we use because of its features that we believed will help us in improving our learners' performance.'

A further response from **HoD 3, School C** was as follows:

'Curriculum cannot be effectively managed without using a particular model or strategy that gives clear guidelines about how to manage a school. In our school, we have some strategies we refer to regarding the school's progress.'

HoD 4, School D thought that strategies for the curriculum strengthen teamwork:

'We have strategies in our school to manage the curriculum in a way that promotes teaching and learning. Strategies for the curriculum strengthen our teamwork and help us fulfill our dream of succeeding with learners through education.'

The findings above show that for the curriculum to be managed well there must be strategies in place to guide it during the process of improving learners' performance. A school without strategies is lost. It was clarified by the participants of this study that curriculum management should be employed in schools for the sake of learners' performance. Rathy (2004) confirms that a curriculum management strategy is a process of presenting a reality with a degree of structure and order. In this case, a curriculum strategy is used for evaluating curriculum management projects for working institutions. Aziz et al. (2018) assert that curriculum management strategies can be used to evaluate the quality of curriculum or education offered in schools. Ross and Goodwin (2019) argue that a curriculum management strategy should serve as a springboard for developing teaching expertise and unleashing innovation. Safitri et al. (2020) agree that to realise learners' talents and boost their success, the school needs the readiness of educators, an appropriate curriculum, and the availability of learning resources. However, it also seems that participants were not well informed about what strategies are appropriate for curriculum management.

They mentioned a variety of strategies by name that they used. The first was the instructional strategy.

The participants indicated that an instructional strategy is a comprehensive, systematic and meaningful plan for instruction and learning. It includes intended learning activities, expectations and outcomes. Instructional strategy can unite school leaders, teachers and learners through shared goals, a shared understanding of how to reach them, and a shared vocabulary for discussing progress (Ross & Goodwin, 2019). Working collaboratively can help benefit learners to improve their performance. This would be possible if teaching staff from different schools gathered occasionally to share views on how to overcome learners' poor performance.

A common objection to instructional strategy is that it can limit or stifle a teacher's creativity and development. Most participants stated that instructional strategy gives meaning and clear direction to teaching and learning; it is systematic, understandable and meaningful, and it guides the learning process.

HoD 1, School A, HoD 4, School D and T1, School A all had the same opinions about the instructional strategy.

HoD 1, School A justified the school's use of a particular model by saying:

'We use instructional strategy in our school as the strategy that works for us in improving our learners' performance. The reason for us to consider this model as the best is because it gives meaning and clear instructions for our teaching and learning. It helps us as well as teachers, since we all agreed upon it. We had a meeting in order to hear their views regarding the selection of the instructional strategy as the best for our school.'

HoD 4, School D felt that instructional strategy was better than others, saying:

'The best strategy for our school is the instructional strategy. We chose it because it is systematic, understandable and meaningful on the instructions we should follow if we wish to improve our learners' performance.'

Similarly, **T1, School A** felt that their school had an excellent instructional strategy, saying:

'Instructional strategy is the strategy we use in our school because we decided on it as the best for us. Our superiors invited us to its selection after clarifying its importance. We then felt it is indeed the best due to its characteristics, which are that it is comprehensive, systematic and meaningful to instruction for learning.'

The findings reveal that 'instructional strategy' is highly rated as the best. Most participants felt that their instructional strategy provided them with clear instructions on how to manage the curriculum which is aimed at improving learners' performance. Hubbel and Goodwin (2019) contend that an instructional strategy can unite school leaders, teachers and learners with shared goals, and a shared understanding of how to reach the intended goals. There is also 'product strategy', as mentioned by some participants and discussed in the next paragraph.

Participants mentioned product strategy in the context of aligning teaching methodologies with outcomes. Product strategy is, strictly speaking, a marketing term that perceives a product as an outcome of management orientation; it assumes that if a quality product is produced and offered to consumers at a certain price, they will find it acceptable (Wu, 2015). This statement implies that learners who are taught and trained using product strategy would be 'products' who live well in a world of high competition and scarce resources. Rampersad (2001) argues that a product strategy outlook can help minimise the incidence of people with no vision for their future.

This curriculum management strategy as expressed by participants is related to Tyler's (1949) product model and applied to teaching. The participants stated that the product strategy is based on experiments; it is practical, and it is also productive because it motivates teachers to do their work and learners to do theirs.

HoD 2, School C expressed his opinion as follows:

'The product strategy is the strategy I use for the benefit of the learners in our school. I found this strategy the best because it is based mainly on experiments. Experiments help learners understand their lessons easily; that

is why I believe in it, and it works for me.'

Another participant responded like this:

'I use the product strategy because it is clear to me as well as to my learners. It is practical. Learners recall practical lessons easily, unlike theoretical lessons. I personally feel it is the best strategy. Actually, I use two models; the second-best strategy for me is participation strategy. Participation strategy is systematic and consistent in assessment for learners and peers of the same age.'

T4 School B's response was as follows:

'Product strategy is the only model I use, and I feel it is the best. This strategy helps us as teachers to groom our learners to be competent in any way. It lights the way of our individual learners and gives hope to them as they grow. It prepares them for their destiny.'

T9, School E also praised product strategy:

'From the strategies in use, I find the product strategy to be the best. This strategy is productive for me because it motivates me and other teachers, maybe, to encourage learners to be the visionaries of their own future because it is wise and helpful for them to follow their own dreams without being pressurised by their elders.'

The study found that process strategy was another strategy favoured by some participants in the study. It was complimented for its clear explanation of activities and its reliance on presentations in graphic form. Sometimes using graphic illustrations is the clearest and easiest way for learners to understand, since individuals' perceptions differ from person to person. The strategy has great potential for use in schools. McDonald (2018) defines product strategy as the flow of work or activities, usually conveyed in the form of a graph or flow chart, that contributes to accomplishing a specific goal.

Rampersad (2001) avers that process strategy is a graphic representation of a

process. The strategy can be based on various notations and standards. It is based on processes of the same nature that may be classified together as a model. Process strategies have a clear beginning and end, and an intended outcome, order of activities and different results based on the decisions that one makes through the course of the process. Participants mentioned the following issues to do with process strategy: process strategy makes use of graphs and diagrams, it is clear, and shows the sequence or flow of activities.

HoD 3, School B commented as follows:

'I prefer the process strategy as the best. The process model is graphical when it comes to the presentation of information, thus helping learners understand the lessons easily. All the work activities are presented in a graph. This allows learners to understand the flow of their activities.'

HoD 4, School D concurred:

'I use the process strategy; it is the best to me because it looks at the same thing in different ways. It makes things much easier for me because it is clear and presents its features in a graph. It is easy for learners and me to understand and use.'

T3, School B expressed her opinion as follows:

'In our school we use the process strategy because we understand it very well. Using its graphical form, we are always able to sequence the flow of activities and easily see which one is done or not done.'

T5, School C added:

'I use the process strategy for my learners because of the way activities are categorised and presented. Even though there are some other strategies we employ, this one is the best for me.'

Another participant added:

'The process strategy is the best for me and my school as well, because of the flow of activities which are clearly shown in a graphical form.'

The findings show that the process model was employed in some schools because of its clarity and applicability to a number of situations. It gives clear meaning and understanding to anyone concerned. More schools should be encouraged to practise it, compare it with other strategies, and assess the results. McDonald (2018) avers that a process model describes the flow of work or activities, usually in a graphic format, that contribute to accomplishing a specific goal. It is clear that process models are typically used to represent and analyse a series of activities that occur repeatedly and regularly. Wynn and Clarkson (2017) insist that process strategies are used to understand, improve and support intended tasks, and can even address curriculum issues.

There is also competence strategy, discussed below.

Competence strategy can be used as a resource for developing curriculum and selecting training material, identifying licensure and certification requirements, and evaluating learners' performance. In other words, competence strategy is the use of a collection of competencies that together define successful performance in a particular work setting. Lillevali and Taks (2017) state that competence strategies have become widespread in various fields of education as a central, strategic tool for educational development and for integrating education with training and lifelong learning. Participants disclosed that the competence model considers prior knowledge, and helps in developing suitable resources to balance processes. It is a way of monitoring learners' work, helps in the selection of proper material, and promotes competency in both teachers and learners.

HoD 1, School A noted the value of competence strategy:

'We use the competence strategy in our school because it considers the learners' prior knowledge, and then helps in developing all the resources required for the Department's aim to help improve learners' performance.'

HoD 4, School D also supported the use of this strategy:

'The competence model is also used in our school to balance the process because competence strategy differs from the other strategies like instructional strategy, and so on. This one allows the use of curriculum in selecting the proper training material and evaluation of the learners' performance. By so doing, learners can be easily helped in improving their performance.'

In the same way, participant **T4, School B** said:

'Competence strategy is used in our school as a way of monitoring and evaluating the learners' work, competency and their learning as it is. It helps in training those learners who are incompetent and shy by nature to be able to do what others do, and see if they can compete with them.'

T8, School D explained the process using the competence strategy:

'Before we start teaching learners, we check their prior knowledge, skills, values and beliefs about a lesson to be delivered. This action calls for measuring their competency and amending it where needed. Then the new lesson is introduced freely according to the competency learners showed through the competence strategy.'

T9, School E said the competence strategy allowed them to promote the competence of both learners and teachers:

'We use competence strategy in our school because it allows us to select proper material for teaching and learning purposes. It promotes competency in both teachers and learners.'

The findings reveal that proper material is needed in schools for the learners' performance to be improved, and for their lifestyles to be enhanced. Pupils need to grow and have a sense of direction in their lives as they progress through school. Proper material to groom them for the future is needed. As stated by the participants

above, competence is required by both teachers and learners. A competent teacher is able to produce competent learners; if a teacher is not competent, it will be difficult for them to help learners to become competent. In other words, teachers should be what they want their learners to be, leading by example. A competence strategy is the capability to apply a set of related knowledge, skills and abilities to successfully perform functions or tasks in a defined work setting (Career One Stop, 2018).

The next paragraph describes participation strategy, which is also used in schools.

According to the study findings, participation strategy provides an organised, consistent and systematic way to undertake assessments, and looks at things through the help of peers of the same age. Farrall (2015) refers to participation strategy in the context of learners with disabilities, stating that participation strategy is a systemic process for implementing augmentative and alternative communications (AAC) through assessment and intervention, based on the functional participation requirements of peers without disabilities who are of the same age. Participation strategy gets teachers to make two sets of AAC decisions, the one for 'today' and the other for 'tomorrow.'

Participation strategy seems to be a good strategy for present-day curriculum management because it does not consider and prepare for the current period only, but also for the future. Furthermore, participation strategy comes from a mindset that considers the 'other side' of any given argument. In short, participation strategy has a lot to do with communication. Most participants said that participation strategy provides consistency, it is systematic, it meets current curriculum demands, and it promotes communication channels.

HoD 3, School C reported:

'When it comes to assessments, we use the participation strategy because we believe that it provides consistency and it is systematic. It matches the demands of the current curriculum, too.'

HoD 4, School D indicated that they used more than one strategy in their school, and that participation strategy allowed for the views of several parties to be heard on

any given matter:

'Participation strategy is the other strategy we use in our school because it meets our curriculum demands. This model also allows arguments, which gives more ideas from different minds.'

T5, School C felt that the strategy fostered better educational outcomes:

'In our school we also use participation strategy as we strive for better educational outcomes. Communication channels promoted by participation strategy are employed in our school for mind usage purposes. We believe in unity, which allows us to share our views about curriculum management – how to manage it in a way that could improve learners' performance.'

The findings on the participation model or strategy reveal that this strategy could be made more use of in all schools, particularly where teachers are urging for more say in the design and management of the curriculum. It is valued for the way in which it fosters communication and the sharing of ideas. The model caters for the current curriculum management and education at large. If schools employed this model, the expectations of the curriculum could surely be met, at least halfway.

Curriculum management strategies should be used effectively in order to help improve learners' performance. Teachers and school leaders should bear in mind that curriculum management strategies are not just models; they need to be embraced and put into practice to have any value. In implementing these strategies, consideration should be given to the following approaches: *The child deficit* curriculum management model, which locates 'deficits' in the learner and designs intervention programmes to remedy the perceived deficit. *The medical* perspective identifies learning problems as a medical phenomenon, leading to the labelling of some children as learning disabled. The *learning disability* perspective is based on the notion of learning difficulties being a result of the difference between potential and actual achievement (Mutloatse, 1997, p. 24).

HoD 2, School B saw value in all the strategies, in as long as they helped the learners:

'We as curriculum managers, together with the teachers, are entitled to use the curriculum strategies positively, in order to help learners, improve their performance. We should make it a point that all the models that might help us help learners are considered.'

HoD 3, School C stated:

'As we use curriculum management strategies to improve learners' performance, we need to embrace the curriculum model we use. We always try for new strategies to keep the work in line with all the curriculum demands.'

HoD 4, School D preferred the idea of perfecting the one strategy that worked:

'I feel that I should keep my strategy of choice alive by always finding new ideas that are in line with it. I get the results I am expecting from my learners almost every time. I do not tend to change to another model while the one am using is quite in order for me.'

T1 School A also indicated the curriculum management strategy she currently used helped her improve her learners' performance:

'The curriculum management strategy I use is my first priority, because it helps me improve my learners' performance, which is the main focus.'

T4, School B focused on what worked:

'I find it very important to embrace what is useful and or meaningful, so I embrace the curriculum management strategy I use at school to help my learners improve their performance.'

T5, School C also placed the focus of all strategies on the learners' and what was best for them:

'The curriculum strategies we use are very important for improving learners' performance; we need to embrace them in order for us to always do the best for our learners.'

T7, School D specifically advocated for 'embracing what is essential':

'Embracing what is essential to you helps you achieve your goals on time. I always keep an eye on the process by embracing the curriculum model I use, which helps me improve learners' performance in my class.'

T9 School E felt that he should embrace the curriculum management strategy he used in order to keep it in good use:

'The curriculum management strategy I use is the best; embracing it is the perfect action every time when you want to keep on obtaining positive results in improving learners' performance.'

4.3.2.1 New strategies for improving learners' performance and revisiting the management strategy in use

Trying something new is always valuable when old ideas are no longer producing the intended results. Schools face high numbers of underperforming learners, which suggests that the principals and teachers should come up with new ways of helping and motivating these learners.

HoD 3, School C was sensitive to this idea and regularly tried new strategies to help learners and prevent problems from occurring:

'As someone in charge of the strategy I use, I always try some new strategies to improve my work while that seems possible, but also to monitor and evade the problems that may occur in the long run.'

HoD 4, School D was also energetic in trying out new strategies:

'I always search for new strategies to plan how to improve learners' performance ahead in order to keep the strategy in use active and productive.'

HoD 5, School E had the same approach:

'Planning ahead, the strategies help me to keep the existing strategy in order. I always try new strategies in time. I do this because I am concerned about my learners and their performance.'

T1, School A said that searching for new strategies was a collective endeavor:

'We search for new ideas to keep the strategy we use in our school working positively for us in improving learners' performance. I prefer searching for new strategies while there is still no challenge at the moment.'

T2, School A said that relevant strategies minimised problems later on:

'New strategies to plan how to keep the strategy in use, working to promote learners' performance at all times, are crucial. This practice minimises the hard times and disappointments when there is no progress in a strategy used.'

T4, School B said:

'Every time we have something precious in our hands, we have to keep it in good order. I always have to come up with new strategies on how to plan to improve learners' performance before things get bad.'

T6, School C saw strategies as a way of improving learners' futures:

'Thinking of new strategies for keeping my work in good order is important to me because I want the learners I teach to improve their performance in order for them to build their future through education.'

T10, School E commented:

'Curriculum management strategies we use always have to be serviced in order for them to do their intended work. I look for new ways of improving and keeping the strategy I use at my work in good shape, giving me even better

results than before in my learners' performance.'

New strategies should be tackled when the models in use are no longer working. Ross and Goodwin (2019) advise that when a current strategy is no longer effective, a new one should be tried. Johnson et al. (2014) state that the principal's planning, development and assessment activities begin with identifying the school's priority needs. These are usually embedded in the school's performance levels and culture.

HoD 3, School B summed up the process of examining old strategies and adopting new ones for the good of the learners:

'After trying almost everything to help my strategy work for me effectively, I revisit it every time to check where the problem is. If there is a need to get rid of some characteristics and employ others, I opt for that.'

It is crucial to revisit a curriculum management strategy or model chosen by a school or an individual teacher if it is seen as no longer effective. The main reason for employing a strategy in a curriculum practice is to see a learner's performance improving or progressing. If that is no longer happening, the current strategy should be re-evaluated. If there is a need to change it, then it should be changed to benefit learners. Teaching strategies provide well-developed ways of teaching that guide learning experiences and the structures that support learning (Behar-Horenstein & Seabert, 2005). Various teaching models indicate the types of learning and outcomes that may be anticipated if they are used. It is important to take positive action against a strategy in use if it is no longer productive in the improvement of learners' performance.

Most participants mentioned that revisiting the curriculum management strategy in use helps the teacher to get rid of unnecessary strategies and adopt new ways of working, so that the teaching strategy remains in line with the curriculum. This helps overcome weaknesses that may not have been detected because of familiarity with old ways.

In this regard, **HoD 3 School C** said:

'I always revisit the strategy I use in my work because I want to make sure that it is still in line with the curriculum; and also that it is still improving my learners' performance.'

HoD 5, School E concurred:

'Revisiting the strategy in use is the key for ensuring that you still use a valid model that enables you to improve your learners' performance.'

T1, School A said:

'Revisiting the strategy I use helps me in improving my learners' performance, because whenever I revisit it I discover the shortfalls in my learners' learning; this leads to their performance not being improved.'

T5, School C said:

'I keep on revisiting the strategy I found working for me and my learners, because I want to make it a point that I give the best to my learners. In this way, I can stand firm knowing that their performance is improving. When I find some problems caused by a lack in my model, I should replace it; but keep it if it is still in line with the curriculum.'

T8, School D concurred with the need for change:

'Revisiting my strategy is my regular business. I do this to ensure that I implement the best ever curriculum for my learners. If I find the strategy I use no longer helpful, I should then replace it with another strategy that would be in line with the curriculum, and improve learners' performance.'

T10, School E had the same view:

'Normally, I revisit the strategy currently in use in order to keep my learners improving their performance. If I notice some deterioration in learners' performance while using the strategy, I always use, I should exchange it for

one more in line with the curriculum.'

The findings reveal that teachers are alert to the matter of changing methods to suit learners and are not stuck in one way of teaching. This was considered of great help. Teachers had a notable concern for their learners, for whom they felt personally responsible. They regularly revisited their strategies to see whether any changes could be made that would benefit their learners.

Revisiting the curriculum strategy in use is a recommended tactic for all teachers. All the members of the teaching staff should be free to contribute ideas on how to improve strategies for the purpose of helping learners understand their work and perform well in assessments. This can help in making collective decisions and empower the individual teacher.

4.3.3 Challenges in curriculum management

The question asked that gave rise to this theme was 'What challenges do you experience when managing the curriculum in your school?' The following statements respond to this question. There are many challenges in schools that hinder curriculum management. It is clear that the Department of Basic Education regularly changes the curriculum, so this was a common challenge in all schools, along with several others. No matter how well organised a school may be, challenges will always crop up, for which school stakeholders should be prepared. Some participants mentioned that they faced challenges from the community, learners and fellow teaching staff in planning the curriculum. In some cases they felt that the curriculum was not being well implemented by teachers; in other cases there were problems of vandalism and theft by members of community. Classroom overcrowding, difficulties with classroom management and unwilling learners were all common challenges faced.

HoD 1, School A described the problems as follows:

'As curriculum managers in our school we face a lot of challenges. Some challenges we face are sometimes from the community, learners, all of the school staff and from our superiors. It might happen that all the groups

mentioned are not happy about our school management, which we set according to what we refer to as our priorities that can help in improving learners' performance in primary schools.'

HoD 2, School B indicated that as HoDs, the challenges were plentiful, and included teachers not doing as they were expected to do:

'We face challenges almost every day when managing the curriculum. Sometimes we plan for the curriculum, and come across the challenge that teachers will not implement what they are told to implement for learners. The problem might be that teachers are failing to manage the classroom in the way that accommodates what is planned by the curriculum management.'

HoD 3, School C expressed some of the unique challenges they faced as a rural school:

'There are many challenges we face in schools when managing the curriculum. Sometimes our school management is being well planned, but the community destroys all the facilities we employed to help us improve learners' performance. For instance, construction of swings for Grade R learners could be destroyed by the people with cows or goats by taking the ropes for the swings.'

HoD 5, School E drew attention to the fact of poor classroom management by teachers:

'There is no way we can avoid challenges; work is work. We suffer different challenges every day. For example, when we do class visits we discover lots of problem in classroom management. Classroom management is a huge challenge when you find things being upside down, no order, learners are all over the place and the teacher is either there or nowhere to be found. The teacher as a classroom manager seems to fail to manage the classroom.'

T3, School B mentioned that learners did not do what they were required to do:

'We face daily challenges in teaching learners as our main task. They are sometimes a challenge when you teach them well, give them some tasks to do; only to find no work done when you want to mark that work.'

T6 School C enlarged upon the teachers' difficulties:

'There are challenges that hinder the improvement of learners that are regarded as contextual factors because we have to act as if they do not exist, whereas they do. They include lack of parental involvement, overcrowded classrooms, and more.'

T7 School D commented:

'Challenges are always there in the field of study because everybody is working. People are always having different views because of their backgrounds, so things are done differently, even though we work together.'

The respondents in this study revealed that classroom management was a particular challenge, with HoDs raising the issue of irresponsible teachers and teachers raising the issue of irresponsible learners. Razafimbelo (2009), William et al. (2017), Koch (2018) and Mohanasundarams (2018) all affirm that teachers experience a variety of challenges that include lack of parental participation, the cascade model of teacher training via workshops that do not address needs at classroom level, lack of SMT support on content and pedagogical knowledge, and absenteeism of teachers and learners. These challenges hinder the effectiveness of curriculum management. Badugela (2012) also mentions lack of alignment between curriculum and assessments, low quality of learning and teaching support material, time frames that are unmanageable and unrealistic, and inadequate teacher orientation and training. All of these limit learning in classroom practice. For teachers' work to be effective, they need to find way to overcome their many challenges in a way that supports one another.

The following sections discuss the sub-themes under the theme of challenges faced by teachers.

4.3.3.1 Performance of learners with different needs

Bryant, Bryant and Smith (2017) define learners with different needs as those with learning, physical or developmental disabilities, behavioural, emotional or communication disorders; or learning deficiencies. Learners with different needs are those whose needs arise from intrinsic factors, such as disabilities, and extrinsic factors, such as social, structural and systematic factors. Teachers should bear in mind that all learners have the same right to education, irrespective of their differences. They should understand that learners with different needs will tend to fall behind in their education compared to most of their peers, but still make efforts to assist them. Teachers should have strategies to accommodate such learners. They should plan the same assessments in different ways that cater for both normal learners and those with different needs.

Teachers need strategies to cater for such learners, so that they can keep pace with their normal peers. It is better not to treat them differently from normal learners. Treating them as capable and as valued members of the class can help them improve personally and academically, boosting their self-esteem and motivating them to try to perform well in their schoolwork. Learners should feel that they are all valued.

Most participants mentioned that schools do not have enough facilities to accommodate learners with different needs. Teachers need to be trained to teach all learners, since the Department of Basic Education has instructed schools to admit all learners in all their diversity.

HoD 2, School A emphasised that learners with different needs need to be included, despite the lack of facilities:

‘Learners with different needs are not to be excluded from normal learners, because all learners deserve the same best education. The problem is that there are not enough facilities offered in schools to accommodate learners with different needs. We as the curriculum managers have to see to it that learners with different needs are catered for.’

HoD 3, School C said that it was a government requirement to cater for all learners, but that teachers were not adequately trained for this:

‘Since the educational laws state that all learners should be accepted in any school, either a full-service or special school, we would help all learners. In order to do this, teachers should be trained to teach all learners. Dealing with diverse learners is challenging, and sometimes causes problems to other learners who are not clear about learners with physical or mental challenges.’

HoD 4, School D showed the same willingness to help such learners, should they wish to attend the school:

‘We hardly get learners with serious different needs; for instance, mentally retarded learners and those with critical physical challenges. We have not had them in our school, not because we refuse to accept them, but their parents never give them to us. In fact, we do not have suitable facilities for them, but we could accept them once they approach us.’

T5, School C’s view of the problem was also positive:

‘Learners with different needs are not a problem. We have a few of them in our school, but their condition is not that critical. Some learners are unable to concentrate very well, some have twisted arms or legs, but these conditions are not problematic. We are able to accept them once they are brought to us.’

T8, School E’s view was equally positive:

‘The educational laws or instructions state that all learners should be allowed in all the normal schools with normal learners, no matter what physical or mental condition they possess. Learners are just learners, so we as teachers need to teach all who are admitted in our school. It does not matter that our school is not a full-service school.’

The findings indicate that teachers hold positive views of the requirement that their schools admit all learners, and are willing to make the necessary adjustments, despite lacking the facilities to help some with more serious needs. They recognised that placing learners with special needs with those who are normal could help them feel accepted and willing to participate in lessons. In addition, normal learners can play a role in helping learners with different needs to regard themselves as normal, too.

Khoaeane (2012) and Mngomezulu (2015) aver that most teachers in primary schools lack the knowledge to use curriculum differentiation in teaching and learning in primary schools owing to a lack of understanding of teaching in an inclusive classroom. This is further confirmed by Ladbroke (2009, p. 4), who states that teachers are faced with challenges in the implementation of inclusive education because most of them are not trained to teach inclusively. Ludago (2020) concurs with the findings that the majority of teachers have insufficient knowledge about the nature of these children's needs, and cannot always help them to fulfill their potential. Adequate, rigorous, inclusive and continuous monitoring and supervising are ways to successfully implement any educational programme (Kayani, 2011).

4.3.3.2 Classroom management

Classroom management allows teachers to keep their class moving forward, stop disruptions from occurring and control learning and direction in their classroom. In their endeavours to manage their classes, teachers face multiple obstacles, as noted by Macias and Sanchez (2015): noise from outside, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of participation by learners in the learning process.

HoD, 1 School A stressed the importance of proper classroom management for learning to occur:

'Classroom management is the most important pillar in teaching and learning because classrooms are the only place where learners gather for learning. If ever classroom management is not properly done, it becomes a big problem. It is the most challenging part.'

HoD 2, School B concurred with this view:

‘Classroom management is the key factor when it comes to learners’ performance improvement. When the classroom is not well managed there will not be any improvement or positive outcomes. It is our duty as the HODs to see if the classrooms are in order, and support teachers whenever our support is needed.’

HoD 5, School E was particularly concerned for the learners:

‘Classroom management is the most important part of learning and teaching; it allows learners to grow academically and predict their future while learning. So, it is very important to make sure that a classroom is well managed in order to benefit learners.’

T3, School B noted the correlation between good classroom management and positive learner outcomes:

‘We try by all means to manage classrooms positively because our learners’ performance improves. We provide the necessities to be in classes during the teaching and learning because we want learners to improve and be able to achieve their goals.’

The above statement is supported by Jacobs et al. (2016) and Thomas (2020), both of whom noted that teachers use classroom management to keep learners focused on learning while preventing disruptions from slowing the learning process.

Classroom mismanagement was found in this study to be one of the challenges that hampered the improvement of learners’ performance. Once a class is well managed, there will be little or nothing to prevent learners from improving their performance. Classroom management actually enables curriculum management. Being in a classroom or space that is not conducive to learning is a challenge that needs urgent

attention. Macias (2015) also asserts that classroom management is the actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction.

4.3.3.3 School management

School management means running a school along the desired lines according to established educational policies. It considers all aspects of the school (policies, material and human resources, programmes, activities, equipment, etc.) and integrates them into a fruitful whole.

Managing a school is almost as challenging as managing a state, which means that the school principal should be a politician, economist, psychologist and sociologist in order to manage a school in a democratic and productive way. In school management, running the school according to the desired educational policies is encouraged in order to meet departmental goals. Everard, et al. (2004) state that school managers are duty bound to make things happen in the schools they manage so that their schools can be effective. Furthermore, Thakur (2014) argues that one of the roles of the teacher should be to offer rewards to influence motivation. This argument is aligned with transactional theory, as explained by Duemer (2013). School leaders should set goals, plan how to achieve those goals, and cope with issues that might arise in organising and carrying out their day-to-day activities, so as to make educational progress happen.

HoD 1, School A noted the various aspects of school management:

‘School management is a hard work to do. It is challenging because it needs a number of people to collaborate for tasks to be done. I simply mean that there should be a cleaner, a security guard or proper security fence, teachers, chefs and more to make a school complete. The school leader, with the help of the school management team, should see to it if all the parties in the school are playing their roles for the benefit of the learners.’

HoD 3, School C concurred on the complexity of management:

'As heads of department and/or school management teams, we should work in collaboration with the principal in the management of the school as the difficult challenge of all challenges, because it involves many stakeholders; for example, learners, teachers, chefs, and so forth.'

T4, School B said

'School management is a challenge because it involves different people from different backgrounds every day in the same place, for the same goals with different attitudes. This calls for everybody's patience and tolerance among each other for the sake of the learners.'

T10, School E also mentioned that school management required all in the school to do their part. This teacher also pointed out that good school management makes classroom management much easier:

'School management is still quite a challenge that needs everybody in the school to participate positively in their respective stations. The teamwork should help in doing away with classroom management as being a challenge to prosperity. We should always strive to offer the best ever education to our learners.'

School management is one of the challenges that can only be conquered through the cooperation of all in the school, both teaching and non-teaching staff. For this, there needs to be a sense of common purpose and a sense of unity in moving towards educational goals.

4.3.3.4 Overcrowded classrooms

Overcrowded classrooms have a higher number of learners than the number they were designed for. They create obstacles to orderly activities in the classroom. They occur because of a shortage of teachers, lack of school infrastructure and a number of poorly resourced no-fee schools (West & Meier, 2020). An overcrowded classroom is one of the most influential factors when it comes to poor performance among learners, and grade repetition exacerbates this problem (Munthusamy, 2015). Most participants mentioned this challenge, pointing out that when their school is overflowing with new learners, classes become uncontrollable. At times classes are so overcrowded that teachers cannot even move around the physical space, but are confined to a small space in the front. This prevents teachers from being able to check on work and give one-to-one assistance where needed. Participants outlined the problem as follows:

HoD 1, School A:

'In our school we are facing a challenge of overcrowding. It is forever flooded with new learners. This challenge needs a lot of work to be done together.'

HoD 3, School C:

'Overcrowded learners are one among many challenges we face almost every day in our school. They tend to disturb the class during teaching and learning process.'

HoD 4, School D:

'The overcrowding of learners is the major challenge in our school, and it is uncontrollable. Our school is not that small. The problem is that we receive a lot of learners seeking admission. Overcrowded learners are not easy to attend to one-to-one. It is also hard to improve their performance while in an awkward situation. We are still waiting for the mobile classrooms we applied for to deal with this challenge'

T5, School C:

'We are struggling to sort out and do away with challenges hindering us to help our learners improve their performance. The most critical challenge to overcome is the overcrowding. We do not have enough space to accommodate all learners. It is hard even to move around to check their work. We need intervention, either from the government or the private sector.'

T8, School D:

'Overcrowded learners is one of the most critical challenges we have ever had. Our classrooms cannot accommodate all learners we admitted. It is not easy to see if there is any improvement in the learners' performance. Even if you can, you cannot help them individually because they are too many in each classroom.'

These statements point to an untenable situation and one that is hardly conducive to effective teaching. Matshipi, Mulaudzi and Mashau (2016) stated that overcrowding also creates a challenge in administration and reporting learners' performance in assessment, as it takes time to reconcile classroom activities. Overcrowding impairs both teaching and learning (Matshipi, et al., 2016). Mushatq, Fatima and Fatima (2019) contend that the classroom is the most important territory inside the school.

4.3.3.5. Lack of parental involvement

Parental support for teachers on issues of curriculum management is an essential component of successful education (Obayopo, 2017). Teachers and non-teaching staff should encourage parents to take part in the teaching of their children by supporting learning activities in the home and by showing an interest in the activities of the school. Lack of parental involvement is likely to hinder their children's learning and progress (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Participants revealed that parents do not want to participate in their children's learning. They do not respond to invitations from the school regarding their children's work, and do not attend parents' meetings. The consensus among teachers was that parental involvement is a key factor in learners' education, and that parents 'sink their children's educational ship', as one teacher put it, by being absent from their education. The following comments make this point:

HoD, 1 School A:

'Parents should play a vital role in their children's learning. Unfortunately, our learners' parents do not involve themselves in their children's learning. For a learner to make it in their schoolwork, parents, teachers and learners should work hand in hand. If one of the three parties is missing, the process will be disturbed, and the learners will suffer. The parents are always problematic because they do not take part.'

HoD 3, School C:

'In our school we have a challenge of parents who do not want to involve themselves in the learning of their children. We always contact them asking them to play their part in their children's learning, but unfortunately, they hardly respond. The fact is we cannot easily improve learners' performance without their parents' involvement.'

T1, School A:

'We as teachers and the school as a whole are facing a challenge of parents who do not want to be a part and parcel of their children's learning. We invite them to view their children's work, parents' meeting and so on; only few parents attend to those invitations from us. This hinders their children in improving their performance.'

T4, School B:

'Lack of parental involvement in learners' learning is quite a challenge, because for learners to pass, parents need to be involved. Parents are always invited by the school or class and subject teachers to work with them in improving their children's performance. Few parents or none at all attend to an invitation from the school. This shows that they care little about their children's future or progress. Parents should participate in the learners' schoolwork.'

T5, School C:

'Parental involvement is one of the challenges that hinder the school from

helping learners improve their performance. It is very important that parents take part in the learners' work. There is a gap on the parents' side.'

T7, School D:

'As teachers in classrooms we face a challenge when we see parents refusing to be part of their children's learning. Parental involvement is the key factor that encourages learners to work harder than before. It is a great pity that parents do not want to take part in their children's work.'

T10, School E:

'There is a big problem faced by teachers in schools. For the learners to make it in their schoolwork, parents, teachers and learners themselves should cooperate. Education is three legged; when one leg is missing, the problem starts. Therefore lack of parental involvement is a challenge. Parents are sinking the educational ship for their learners, which hampers their children's positive performance in their school-work.'

The findings reveal that there is a serious lack of parental involvement in children's education and that this lack of support affects the children's performance. Parents should support teachers on curriculum issues as it benefits their children's learning. The participants' statements are supported by Mushatq and Fatima (2019), who mention that the classroom is the most important territory in the school.

Lara and Saracosti (2019) contend that parental involvement in schools has been demonstrated to be a key factor for learners' academic outcomes. Researchers such as Munje and Mncube (2018) acknowledge the importance of parental involvement in children's education.

Some parents lack knowledge and understanding of what is expected of them as parents. The parents' duty is to ensure that their children succeed in their learning. They are indeed the children's first teachers and should not relinquish that role when children enter school, particularly given the many challenges that schools face.

Lack of parental involvement is evidently a problem in the teaching and learning process. For positive teaching and learning to take place, there should be a balance of responsibilities, where each of the three parties – teachers, parents and learners themselves – play their part well. The teacher teaches the learners at school, the learners learn and do their given tasks, and at home the parent sees to it that the learner's work is done. That is the very minimum. With parental involvement, learners acquire discipline and become motivated to do better. Parental support plays an important part in the learning process.

4.3.3.6 Lack of learner participation in their schoolwork

Learner participation is defined as learners being active and engaged in the classroom, influencing curriculum design, and feeling that they belong to a community (Bergmark & Westman, 2018). Learners' participation and experiences create engagement and motivation for learning here and now, and also for the future. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge learners' diverse understandings in the way they participate. Teachers and parents should work together in motivating learners to participate in their learning. Lack of learner participation makes it hard to see their progress in achieving the objectives set by their teachers. If learners do not participate, there will be no improvement in their work. They should do their classwork, homework and projects as they are instructed to do. Failure to respond to given instructions means no improvement; and that is where an intervention should be practised by both the teacher and the parents. Some participants mentioned that learners are no longer interested in their schoolwork; they are not willing to learn, but only to be present. Participants expressed their distress about their learners' attitude as follows:

HoD 1, School A:

'It is very disappointing to have learners who do not care about their schoolwork. These days, learners are no longer interested in their work. Letting learners to participate in their learning is a challenge because you cannot force them. You give them homework, they do not do it, classwork they fail to finish on time, and projects, as well – they hardly do them. It is

impossible to help learners improve their performance.'

HoD 5, School E:

'It is almost every school's challenge to experience lack of learner participation. Nowadays, learners are very indolent. In our school we face the same challenge, and this makes it difficult to notice improvement in their performance.'

T2, School A:

'In our classrooms we are challenged by a lack of learner participation. We motivate them every day, and even invite external motivators, like policemen, nurse, and people from other sectors.'

T4, School B:

'We need more support to encourage our learners to participate in their learning processes. Learners are no longer participating in their schoolwork. They do no class activities, or homework, or anything else. This makes it difficult to see the areas that need special attention I order for them to improve their performance.'

T6, School C:

'Lack of learner participation is still a challenge in our school. We give learners the tasks suiting their ages and grades, but they do not participate at all. We need more external sectors to intervene.'

T10, School E:

'Lack of learner participation is tiring and challenging because we do everything in our power to let our learners see the light. Unfortunately, they do not seem to show interest and enthusiasm towards their work. They are making things difficult for us to help them improve their performance.'

The findings show how unfortunate it is that learners are neglecting their education. For their performance to improve, they need to practise what they have been taught. Susak (2016) confirms that learners' participation in their own learning is a critical factor for yielding positive outcomes and for developing their abilities.

Sánchez, de Haro-Rodríguez and Martínez (2019) argue that lack of learner participation in most classrooms is due to lack of teacher training to respond to the educational needs of all students. This implies that teachers might lack the competencies to understand all learners and the skills to engage learners who seem non-responsive. Bahmanbizar, Nazarieh, Toufan, Dehghani and Beigzadeh (2019) concur that the problem may have to do with teachers, rather than learners. They state that non-participation by learners in classroom activities or homework can be a result of the teacher's inability to create a lively learning environment, where learners interact and have rapport with the teacher. Furthermore, it can be argued that participation goes further than teachers asking questions of the learners; more is required. Learners need to be given opportunities to ask questions, and to be given tasks during lessons, such as small group tasks or discussions, after which a few learners may be required to present something to the rest of the class. Lack of active engagement inevitably fosters boredom among learners. It appears that in some classes, learners actually pretend to be writing. To overcome this lack of real engagement, teachers need to nurture an accepting environment and understand the needs of learners.

4.3.3.7 Shortage of LTSM and relevant policy documents to improve learners' performance through curriculum management

Sedibe (2016) defines learning and teaching support material (LTSM) as any tool or resource used to enhance teaching and understanding of the subject content. LTSM, including electronic material, facilitates learning. LTSM includes textbooks, workbooks, and/or teachers' manuals.

The use of relevant documents in schools is important. It is very difficult to keep curriculum work in order when, for example, a teacher lacks an essential document such as the CAPS document, or has only a passing familiarity with it. Both the teacher and the HoD should be in possession of the same relevant documents, and be well acquainted with them. This is an essential starting point in assisting teachers to implement and monitor the curriculum. Without these documents, they will not know in any detail what they are supposed to be teaching, or when. Curriculum documents are, of course, only the first level of essential documents for teachers.

The lack of textbooks in many classes is also a burning issue.

Without textbooks and other relevant teaching material, teachers cannot help learners effectively, learners do not benefit, and their performance drops. LTSM apart from textbooks includes science kits, radios, and large-screen monitors where video clips might be played for learners to learn from. All schools should have LTSM to enhance teaching, and add variety to lessons. This might help overcome the problems of non-engagement and boredom. At the very least they need the prescribed textbooks in adequate numbers – one for each learner.

Most participants said that they had textbooks, but they not always in sufficient numbers. They said that apart from textbooks, they needed technological LTSM in order to meet the demands of the modern world.

Participants commented on their shortage of LTMS at their respective school as follows:

HoD 1, School A:

'The other challenge we face our school is the shortage of learning and teaching support material. We have the textbooks, and we have enough of them; but we still need more in order to give the best ever education to our learners and improve their performance.'

HoD, School C:

'We need more attention from the government and private companies in terms of LTSM. This challenge narrows the chances of improving learners' performance, because teachers are dependent only on textbooks.'

T3, School B:

'Shortage of LTSM is a challenge that delays the good work of teachers and learners. In rural areas we are challenged in many ways. For instance, we are far from the main roads, so the delivery trucks for some LTSM from the government might get lost or take another route; then we miss suitable LTSM.'

T6, School C:

'We do not have the relevant LTSM to help our learners improve their performance. Lots of subjects or lessons demand technology. Without LTSM there is not much that can be done to improve learners' performance.'

The findings show that LTSM is key to fulfilling the goal of improving learners' performance. In the modern world, teachers have become the focus of attention because of their unique roles in society (Oloruntegbe, 2011). Much criticism is levelled at teachers today, yet they are working under extraordinary circumstances where a dire lack of LTSM hampers their delivery of lessons, apart from all the other issues they face. The LTSM shortage is a challenge that teachers cannot face and overcome overnight; it needs departmental officials' intervention with immediate effect. The problem has been persisting for years and never seems to get resolved, especially in rural schools. Sánchez, de Haro-Rodríguez and Martínez (2019) state that lack of resources and poor organisation on the part of government officials present a major obstacle to learning and the participation of all students.

The challenges identified in this section show that teachers are working under stressful circumstances and in many ways facing an uphill battle against various forces, some of which are beyond their control. They have to deal with learners with different needs, classroom management in under-resourced and overcrowded classrooms, lack of parental involvement, lack of learner participation and shortages of LTSM. All these challenges impact on the proper management of the curriculum and need to be addressed for the benefit of learners.

The following section discusses the documents used to gather data in this study.

4.4 Document analysis

When the researcher asked for permission to collect data in schools, she also asked to analyse documents relevant to the management of the curriculum to improve learners' performance in primary schools. Dalglish, Khalid and McMahon (2020) contend that document analysis is one of the most commonly used methods in research. Documents are used during data collection and analysis to answer research questions. Bowen (2009) mentioned that document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, including printed, electronic

computer-based and internet transmitted material. De Andrade et al. (2018) argue that document analysis encompasses the identification, verification and consideration of documents which are related to the object investigated. Bowen (2009) clarified that the main function of document analysis is to contextualise facts, situations or points in time and lead to the adoption of new panoramas in other environments.

The researcher analysed the documents that were used in schools when teachers and HoDs manage the curriculum. The analysed documents were the Curriculum and Policy Statement (CAPS) for each phase, the Supervision Planner and Tracker, Structuring and Monitoring Conversations, and Jika iMfundo. The purpose of analysing documents was to find out if the schools were using and following proper documents in their curriculum management. The researcher wanted to know the reasons for learners not improving in their performance, and also to see whether all expectations of the Department of Basic Education were being met regarding efforts to improve learners' performance.

The researcher was not interested in what the documents entailed, she wanted to know which documents were used in primary schools, to see if those documents are in line with curriculum in use and also to check if those documents used are helping learners improve their performance or not. The aim was to check if the used documents were valid and available in all targeted schools for the benefit of learners; as teachers and HoDs have the documents to be followed as their guides.

Table 4.4 below summaries the situation in each school with regard to the presence of these crucial documents. The documents were analysed in order to find out where curriculum management was lacking, either on the part of the teachers or their supervisors. They were also analysed to check whether or not the correct majors were being applied.

Table 4.4: Summary of documents related to curriculum management

Jika iMfundo	Structuring and Monitoring Conversation Statements (CAPS)	Supervision Planner and Tracker	Curriculum and Assessment Policy	School
The teachers concerned had the Jika iMfundo documents (Trackers and Planners) to keep classroom practice in order.	The HoD produced the Structuring and Monitoring document, which is a tool she used to monitor the teachers' work in her school.	The HoD used the Supervision Planner and Tracker to check whether teachers were doing their work accordingly.	The HoD and both teachers (T1 and T2) had the CAPS documents.	School A
All teachers who participated in the study had their Jika iMfundo documents and used them to manage their classes.	There was no document found to structure and monitor teachers' work. The HoD did not have it.	The HoD used the Supervision Planner and Tracker to check whether teachers were doing their work accordingly.	The HoD and both teachers (T3 & T4) interviewed had the CAPS documents.	School B
The teachers in this school used Jika iMfundo document to track and plan lessons. They showed great attachment to this document and regarded it as the most helpful of all.	The document was found with the HoD, but it was not in good condition. It showed evidence of not being used regularly to structure and monitor work.	The HoD used the Supervision Planner and Tracker to check whether teachers were doing their work accordingly.	The HoD had no CAPS document, but both teachers (T5 & T6) had it.	School C
The Jika iMfundo document was being used by the teachers in the school as per the Department of Basic Education instructions.	The HoD used this document as required to ensure that the work was done in an acceptable way.	The HoD had the document for tracking teachers' work, but some information was missing because pages were torn.	The HoD had the CAPS document, and one teacher (TL8) had it. The other, T7, had no CAPS document.	School D

All the teachers produced their Jika iMfundo documents and showed evidence that they used it help them manage the curriculum.	The document was found in the school. It was in good order and looked as if it were used, as it was put with other documents used daily.	The HoD had no Supervision Planner and Tracker.	The HoD and both teachers (T9 & T10) had the CAPS document.	School E
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4.4.1 CAPS document

CAPS stands for National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement which is a single, comprehensive and concise policy document introduced by the Department of Basic Education for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-12 (Department of Basic Education, 2022). It gives clear guidance to teachers on what to teach and how to assess.

Document analysis showed that to some extent, curriculum management in the schools is suffering since some relevant documents for managing and monitoring the curriculum were not available or not in good order. For instance, HoD 3, School C, had no CAPS document. For an HoD not to have the most critical document for curriculum management suggests a lack of proper management of teachers and ultimately of the curriculum. This also attests to the limitations of document analysis (see 3.5.2.2). Where an HoD does not have a CAPS document while teachers in his or her department have it, problems are likely to occur. The HoD should know the daily work expected of the teachers he or she supervises.

T7, School D also had no CAPS document, making it difficult for that teacher to plan and stick to curriculum guidelines. It is questionable whether a teacher can teach without the CAPS document, which is the backbone of every day's lessons to be taught. Schoeman (2018) confirms that CAPS is very important for planning the daily activities since it covers in some detail all the work to be carried out for learners' growth and performance.

4.4.2 Supervision Planner and Tracker

The Supervision Planner and Tracker is a planning tool used by HoDs to record dates for their supervisory responsibilities (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2018). This tool is important in curriculum management because HoDs use it for checking on whether the required work has been done by teachers. It helps them understand where the lack is, and to rectify any gaps in performance on the part of teachers.

HOD 4, School D had the Supervision Planner and Tracker and used it for supervision planning and tracking. The problem was that pages were missing from the document, suggesting that it was not held in high regard. **HoD 5, School E** had no Supervision Planner and Tracker document at all. This is a serious issue. One wonders how an HoD can be without such an important document for supervising and tracking the teachers' work. This means that somewhere, someone is failing to do their work.

4.4.3 Structuring and Monitoring Conversation

Structuring and Monitoring Conversation is a tool that provides guidelines on what to look out for and what to talk about during a professional conversation between the HoD and the teacher (Mthiyane et al, 2018). The guidelines give significant input on the manner in which HoDs are to help teachers manage the curriculum. Regular one-on-one discussions between teachers and their superiors help to keep teachers on track, feel supported and ultimately improve their learners' performance.

In School B, HoD 2 no Structuring and Monitoring Conversation. An HoD uses a Structuring and Monitoring Conversation as their 'Bible' in terms of conducting a proper one-on-one conversation with a teacher or a group of teachers regarding the schoolwork. The document should be in order and constantly available. HoD 3, School C had the relevant document, but it was not in an acceptable condition and clearly not used. This suggests that at both these schools, the HoD is not doing her work as required. This is likely to have ripple effects and cascade down to lack of proper curriculum management by the teachers under these HoDs and, unfortunately, the learners they teach.

4.4.4 Jika iMfundo (Tracker and Planner)

Mthiyane et al. (2018) state that Jika iMfundo is an intervention for systemic education change with a particular focus on curriculum coverage. It was developed by the Project to Improve Learning Outcomes working in partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. The intervention made through Jika iMfundo is intended to improve learners' performance through enhanced curriculum management. Through Jika iMfundo, training is organised specifically for HoDs to assist them to support teachers. The aim is help teachers improve curriculum coverage, and hence to help learners improve their understanding of the work.

All the teachers had the Jika iMfundo Tracker and Planner documents to keep their work in order. T1, School A and T10, School E, had all the Jika iMfundo documents and used them.

From the document analysis, it is would appear that teachers are not being adequately supported by their superiors in terms of curriculum management. The HoDs need to ensure that they have all the relevant document and refer to them frequently, so that the entire body of teachers moves in the same direction and fulfills the requirements of the curriculum. Learners should not suffer from the HoDs' weaknesses, and teachers need all the support they can get when working in stressed and overcrowded conditions. The lack of HoD support, as evinced by their lack of relevant documents, suggests that teachers are not receiving the support they need to perform well.

Document analysis is one of the most important techniques of collecting data. It emerged from the discussions that the CAPS document, the most important document in terms of laying out the curriculum for each phase and subject, was either missing or in bad shape. This suggests that teachers lack guidance on what to teach, which would make it almost impossible for them to manage the curriculum and monitor learners' progress.

In addition, the Supervision Planner and Tracker used by the HoDs to monitor curriculum coverage were also missing or in bad shape. Again, this suggests that

monitoring of curriculum coverage is either not done or is incomplete.

The Structuring and Monitoring Conversations document, intended to help HoDs support teachers, was a challenge in two schools of the five schools. This suggests that conversations between HoDs and teachers are either not happening or are being conducted in a non-productive way.

Lastly, with regard to Jika iMfundo, HoDs were not providing the support required, which can lead to teacher frustration.

Documents analysis provided a clear impression of available resources that impact either positively or negatively on curriculum management.

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the data was presented according to themes and subthemes.

The first theme, teacher involvement in curriculum management, had the following sub-themes: teachers' role in curriculum management; objectives for improving learners' performance through curriculum management; and learner progress from grade to grade.

The second theme, Strategies to improve curriculum management, and the following sub-themes: the use of curriculum management strategies to improve learners' performance; new strategies for improving learners' performance; and revisiting the model in use.

The third theme, Challenges in curriculum management, had the following seven sub-themes; performance of learners with different needs; performance of learners with normal needs; classroom management; school management; overcrowded classrooms; lack of parental involvement; lack of learner participation; and shortage of LTSM, including relevant policy documents for improving learners' performance through curriculum management.

The following four documents were also analysed: CAPS documents, Supervision Planner and Tracker, Structuring and Monitoring Conversation; Jika iMfundo

(Trackers and Planners).

Chapter Five presents a summary of the review of the literature and a synthesis of the findings. Limitations, conclusions and recommendations based on the outcomes of the current study are provided.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter focused on data presentation, analysis and interpretation. In this chapter, the researcher summarises the findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations. The principal aim of the study was to investigate how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit using a case study approach.

The study was based on the interpretivist paradigm and adopted a qualitative approach, making use of document analysis and unstructured interviews with HoDs and Post Level 1 teachers. Through purposive sampling, fifteen participants were recruited into the study, ie five HoDs and ten Post Level 1 teachers in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings of the study are presented under each of the research questions re-stated below.

5.2 Research questions answered

Chapter One provided a general background and focused on how teachers can help learners improve their performance through improved curriculum management. It also revealed the aims and objectives of the study, expressed in five key questions. Below, the research questions are stated and answered.

- How does curriculum management improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit?

The curriculum should be managed in a positive way that helps learners improve their performance. For optimum curriculum management, all educational stakeholders should be involved. Teachers, in particular, ought to play a role in shaping and managing the curriculum.

It was clear that the curriculum needs to be managed in a way that benefits learners. The findings suggest that teachers and other stakeholders, including some non-teaching staff, should work together to help learners improve their performance. Teachers are central to any curriculum development effort, and better teachers support better learning, because they have the necessary knowledge about the curriculum, the learners and teaching methodologies (see Section 4.3.1.1, pages 113-116). As teachers play an integral part in implementing the curriculum, they should be involved in curriculum management practices, too. There are four objective steps in curriculum management in which teachers should be more involved. These are: identifying the aims and objectives of the curriculum, selecting topics to be learned cumulatively, organising and sequencing the content, and evaluating the selected content (see section 4.3.1., page 113).

- Can learner performance be affected by issues of curriculum management in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit?

Yes, the issue of curriculum management can affect learners' performance, which depends very much on how well the curriculum is managed. This, in turn, depends, at least in part, on how well the teachers are supported and monitored by HoDs. When insufficient support is offered to teachers and the school as a whole (including by parents), learners' performance is negatively affected.

The issues of curriculum management affects learners in primary schools. It is also clear that more collaborative work among teachers and other school staff could affect learners positively. Where teachers work in isolation, learners suffer. The findings reveal that collaborative work among all education stakeholders could benefit learners, thus improving their performance. School managers are duty bound to make things happen in schools they manage, according to Everard, et al. (2004) (see Section 4.3.3.3). HoDs should help teachers in setting goals, planning how to achieve those goals, and/or coping with issues that might arise in organising and carrying out their day-to-day activities, so as to help learners improve their performance.

- What challenges are faced by schools or teachers in curriculum management in their quest to improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit?

Teachers face a number of challenges in managing the curriculum. Lack of parental involvement in their children's learning affects both teachers and learners. Parents should see to it that their children do their homework and check the quality thereof; they should ask about events in school, what their children have learned, etc, to show interest and support of the entire educational endeavour. If necessary, they should support them by enrolling them in extra lessons, which would prevent problems compounding over time. Overcrowded classrooms affect everything that teachers do, negatively impacting learners' motivation, causing distractions, and making it extremely difficult for teachers to give the kind of individualised attention that learners need and deserve. Classroom management is an ongoing battle in overcrowded classrooms and can greatly demotivate both teachers and learners. This is a situation beyond the control of teachers and needs urgent attention by the Department of Basic Education.

Clearly, challenges will always be there, but ways must be found to overcome them. The first step in overcoming them is to identify them; then resources must be marshalled and the necessary parties approached to help play their part in solving them. A number of challenges continue to hinder proper curriculum management in the primary schools where this study was conducted. All educational stakeholders should be of one mind in overcoming these challenges. The fact that the Department of Education regularly changes the curriculum exacerbates the stressful conditions under which teachers work (see section 4.3.3). Although some curriculum management challenges differ from school to school, most are common to no-fee-paying government schools.

- What model may be used to improve learners' performance through curriculum management?

Instructional models can be used to improve learners' performance, since they give an idea of the general approach to use when working with learners in different. Learners are also given clear guidelines for the execution of their work, with their teachers' guidance. It is discussed in detail under 5.6, Recommendations.

Models for instructional processes are an important part of curriculum management for improving learners' performance. School leaders and teachers should always seek strategies that help them improve learners' performance. The strategies give clear guidelines on how to attain certain goals. Rathy (2004) argues that using established curriculum strategies for certain activities can result in greater efficiency and productivity. Curriculum models differ from school to school, since schools do not operate in the same way. Each has its own habit and tendency in doing its work. If the school employs a good strategy and follows it correctly, its learners can benefit; and if the school employs a strategy which is not clear or not correctly followed, learners will suffer.

5.3 Summary of chapters

Chapter One presented background information on the topic of curriculum management for improving learners' performance. Curriculum management strategies were described as useful for the management of the curriculum and improving learners' performance. The chapter provided an overview of the study, describing transactional and complexity theories, which formed the theoretical underpinning of the study, and the nature of the problem, which is how the curriculum is managed in primary schools. The chapter also described the contribution of the study to the body of knowledge, the research methodology employed and the limitations of the study.

According to Mandukwini (2016), the proper use of curriculum management strategies can have a markedly positive effect on learners' performance. Curriculum managers should see to it that the curriculum management strategies they employ

are productive, and if not, they should take action.

In Chapter Two, the study reviewed the literature on curriculum management and improving learners' performance in primary schools, in the context of African and South African schools and gave a description of the theoretical framework (see Section 2.2). The findings from the literature review revealed that for curriculum management to improve learners' performance, teachers and HoDs need to consider the following: curriculum management principles; the specific challenges they face in the quest to improve learners' performance; policies on curriculum management and their alignment with practice; and models used in curriculum management. The review gave insights into how the curriculum needs to be managed in order to improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit.

The theoretical frameworks adopted in this study were transactional theory, also known as management theory, and complexity theory, also known as systems theory. The transactional theory is characterised by three approaches, which were stated by Duemer (2013) as: *contingent rewards*, *active management by exception*, and *passive management by exception* (see Section 2.2). The literature review revealed that through transactional theory, curriculum managers are able to deal with crises and emergency situations (see Section 2.2.1). Complexity theory is characterised by four elements, namely: *agents with schemata*, *self-organising networks sustained by importing energy*, *coevolution to the edge of chaos*; and *system evolution based on recombination* (see Section 2.2.2)

Chapter Three described the approaches the researcher used to develop and validate the study she conducted. It described the research paradigm, research design, sampling and procedure. The research paradigm (see Section 3.2) was interpretivist, which enables researchers to study humans beings' interpretations of phenomena and experiences. It is opposed to a strictly positivist approach to research. The core idea in interpretivism is to work with subjective meanings already there in the social world. The research design (see Section 3.3) was a summary of the procedures for conducting the current study, clarifying when, from whom and

under which conditions the data was obtained. This study used the qualitative approach to collect data.

Section 3.4 (the sampling procedure) revealed that the researcher employed purposive sampling in this study because it allowed her to select knowledgeable participants for the study who would be in a position to help answer the research questions. In this study, interviews and document analysis were the instruments used to collect data (see Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2). Data was collected from the HoDs and Post Level 1 teachers as respondents in interviews document analysis, since they were the ones implementing the curriculum in schools to improve learners' performance. The aim of the interviews was to find out how the curriculum was managed and how to improve learners' performance through better curriculum management in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit. Finally, Chapter Three described the issues of trustworthiness (see Section 3.8), which entailed credibility (Section 3.8.1), transferability (Section 3.8.2), dependability (Section 3.8.3), and confirmability (Section 3.8.4). It also discussed the ethical considerations of this study (Section 3.9).

Chapter Four presented and analysed the data according to themes and sub-themes. Data analysis brought order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. The responses of HoDs and Post Level 1 teachers were used to ascertain the themes derived from the tools used to collect data (see Sections 4.2 and 4.5). Three themes and 15 sub-themes emerged from the study.

The first emergent theme was teachers' involvement in curriculum management (see Section 4.3.1), with the following sub-themes: the importance of teachers' involvement in curriculum management; teachers' role in curriculum implementation; objectives for improving learners' performance through curriculum management; and learners' progress from grade to grade.

The second theme was strategies to improve curriculum management (Section 4.3.2), with the following sub-themes: the use of curriculum models to improve

learners' performance; new strategies for improving learners' performance; and revisiting the models in use.

The third theme was challenges in curriculum management (Section 4.3.3.), with the following seven sub-themes: the performance of learners with different needs; classroom management; school management; overcrowded classrooms; lack of parental involvement; lack of learner participation; and shortage of LTSM and relevant policy documents in improving learners' performance through the curriculum management.

5.4 Discussion of research findings

The literature discusses the need for excellent curriculum management for optimum learner performance in schools. Bullock and Muschamp (2006) aver that the curriculum should be managed in a way that affirms best practice in the all subjects. The aim of this study was to explore the views of the HoDs and teachers with regard to curriculum management for improving learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit. The investigation was guided by the following objectives:

- to investigate how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit;
- to determine how curriculum management affects learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit;
- to establish curriculum management challenges faced by educators in uMhlathuze Circuit;
- to propose a curriculum management model that may be used to improve learners' performance in primary schools.

The followings sections discuss each objective in turn.

5.4.1 How curriculum management can improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit

The findings from the HoDs and teachers reveal that teachers' involvement in curriculum management (see Section 4.3.1) could help in improving learners' performance owing to their deep knowledge of what is happening in the classrooms regarding teaching and learning. There is a need for valid, knowledgeable inputs in administrative decision making from various organisational levels, and teachers are ideally placed to give this input (Gemechu, 2014). Increasing teachers' involvement in curriculum management could be of great help because they are the custodians of instruction, implementers of school policies and co-organisers of schools' activities.

According to the study findings, teachers are not currently involved in curriculum management, but are only given instructions on what to teach, based on a curriculum that was not planned by them. They have to implement whatever curriculum is planned in their absence. This is ultimately unfair to the learners, because teachers' contributions to the curriculum could benefit them. It is difficult for teachers to give assurance of the positive results of their teaching if they are not involved in the planning of what is taught.

The findings also reveal that teachers play a vital role in implementing the curriculum. Curriculum implementation is a serious activity that needs more attention from both teachers and learners. Teachers should be sure of what they implement for learners because it is the presentation of the curriculum that affects their understanding and performance. The respondents added that without teachers, there would be no teaching and learning, and thus no improvement in learners' performance. For them to learn formally, there has to be a teacher in front of them. It was clear from the findings from the study participants that teachers should indeed be involved in curriculum management processes.

5.4.2 How curriculum management affects learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit

The findings of the study confirm that the way the school staff or other education stakeholders behave affects learners' performance. Whenever there is tension among school staff, there is obviously no collaborative work, which adversely affects learners. Learners are highly vulnerable to the effects of teachers' and other school staff's attitudes. Once there is collaboration, the objectives set by the school to improve learners' performance can be met with ease.

The study findings reveal that meeting the objective of improving learners' performance through curriculum management leads to learners' progress from grade to grade, if set objectives are followed (see Section 4.3.1.4). Learners' progress from grade to grade shows that teaching and learning processes were positively practised by teachers with positive attitudes to their work. The support that teachers receive from their superiors is critical, and affects how they teach, which naturally affects learners and their progress from grade to grade.

5.4.3 The curriculum management challenges faced by educators in uMhlathuze Circuit

The findings of the study confirm that educators face a range of serious challenges in primary schools in their implementation of the curriculum for the purpose of improving learners' performance. Seven challenges emerged from the study, discussed under Section 4.3.3: performance of learners with different needs; classroom management; school management; overcrowded classrooms; lack of parental involvement; lack of learner participation; and shortage of LTSM and relevant policy documents in improving learners' performance through curriculum management. These seven challenges differ slightly from what was found in the literature, where four main challenges were identified, as follows:

- lack of parental involvement (McDowell et al, 2018; Munje & Mncube, 2018);

- overcrowded classroom and non-conducive learning environment (Muthusamy, 2015);
- shortage of learning teaching support material (LTSMs (Mopeli 2017; Riet 2012); and
- lack of proper training and development for educators in curriculum management (Bourdesa, 2016).

The first three concur with what was found in this study.

Challenges that emerged as new from the study and were not mentioned in the literature were classroom management and school management and learners with different needs, and non-participating learners. Participants saw *classroom management* as one of the key factors that affect learner performance. The study findings reveal that classroom management is essential for fostering an atmosphere in which learners can grow academically. Proper classroom management is a challenge, in that some teachers, for various reasons, simply fail to manage their classrooms in the expected manner. Chaotic and dirty classrooms are not uncommon in South African schools, and were observed in this study. Such conditions are evidence that the teacher is not managing the classroom and is therefore failing to do justice to the learners. The mis-management of the classroom was seen as having a negative effect on learners' performance, a finding that is supported by Macias and Sanchez (2015).

The study revealed that *school management* is a distributive, participative and collaborative activity that requires all stakeholders in the school to work together. School management requires tolerance and teamwork. Thakur (2014) expressed motivation as a tool to encourage teamwork, with which Duemer (2013) concurs, stressing that the use of rewards can be a helpful motivating factor. School management becomes a challenge when there is lack of motivation among staff and little sense of teamwork.

The findings of the study confirm that the challenges faced are endemic in both urban and rural schools. Learners with special needs provide a particular challenge; while teachers showed a willingness to help, they conceded that they did not have the equipment or know-how to offer the kind of help needed by many of these learners. Challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of parental involvement and lack of learner participation all affects teacher morale and the effectiveness of their teaching. The HoDs, together with teachers and parents, should revisit instructions from the Department of Basic Education, becoming more familiar with each given instruction to check whether they are still fulfilling what is expected of them. The Department requires that all learners in their diversity should be accommodated in any given school, whether it is a full service school or a normal school. This stipulation causes a great deal of difficulty to educators because few are trained to teach learners with special needs. The findings of the study also reveal that there are contextual factors such as broken windows and failing equipment that hinder teachers' work and need urgent attention.

Lack of parental involvement emerged as a finding in the sampled primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit. Parents need to be encouraged to take part in their children's learning. Lack of learner participation in their lessons is another huge challenge which needs the intervention of all stakeholders, since without a willing engagement on the part of learners, it becomes extremely difficult to help them improve their performance. The overcrowding of classes exacerbates all other problems. Learners cannot perform in a space which is not conducive to learning, and teachers are hardly able to offer the help learners need when they are constantly battling noise and unable to move freely about the classrooms.

The shortage of LTSM also greatly impedes the teaching and learning process, making it impossible for teachers to support learners, who are forced to share textbooks. This was a particular challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lack of proper training and development for educators, identified in the literature (Bourdesa, 2016) as a problem in curriculum management, did not emerge as a

challenge in curriculum management in this study. Instead, what was found far more pressing was the lack of HoD support to teachers, as evidenced during the tracing of documents in each school. The finding may indicate that HoDs, who are themselves teachers, need further support. Many had missing documents or showed evidence of not following protocols for teacher-HoD meetings. They have an essential responsibility to support teachers and to see that all required documents for teaching, monitoring and tracking of curriculum are available and used.

5.4.4 A proposed curriculum management model that may be used to improve learners' performance in primary schools

The study's findings reveal that a model would be useful for assisting schools to help improve learners' performance. Section 4.3.2.2., on the need to use new curriculum management models where old ones are no longer effective, indicates that teachers and school leaders should bear in mind that any model they select for their school should help them reach their goal of improving learners' performance. In some cases, it may be found that an existing model still serves the purpose, but its followers have not understood it or have modified it by bringing in features from models used by other schools. The findings confirm that by revisiting the model in use, the need to change it may become apparent.

Based on the literature reviewed, the theoretical framework and the input of the study participants, the researcher designed a curriculum management model that may be used in schools to improve learners' performance. The model is shown in Table 5.1.

It was clear from the study findings that in the sampled primary schools, teachers make an effort to present the curriculum according to given instructions. However, implementation needs to be monitored and evaluated, to see whether the curriculum fulfills its intended goal.

The following paragraphs describe the aspects of education and teaching that the researcher took into consideration when designing the model. These factors should

inform any attempt to design a model for proper curriculum management to improve learners' performance.

5.4.4.1 Interpreting and understanding the school vision and mission

A school's vision and mission are captured in strategic documents in which it makes a public declaration of its values, priorities and purpose (Allen & Kern, 2018). The school management is expected to take teachers on board in sharing the vision and mission, so that they understand expectations of performance as laid down by the school. Aspects of the vision and mission of a school, as discussed in Chapter One, would include commitment to success for all, flexibility and responsiveness, shared vision, a climate of challenging and stimulating teaching, and a strong and fair disciplinary climate. These are the sorts of principles that should guide and assist teachers to contextualise their work in accordance with the expectations of the Department of Basic Education and the community. The principle of establishing and interpreting the school vision is aligned with Carrier's instructional leadership model (Maponya 2015), which expresses that for a school to be successful, the principal needs to demonstrate a number of key behavioural characteristics that include a sense of vision and participatory leadership. Furthermore, the school can 'sell' the vision to all stakeholders to promote collaborative work on achieving a common goal.

Establishing a clear vision is the first step in the journey to achieve the school's goals. It is stated in the study in that lack of commitment to the vision of their respective schools contributed to the learners' poor performance (see Section 2.3). In this case, it is clear from the study that when vision is neglected there is a concurrent lack of motivation and no positive performance among learners. Therefore, everyone concerned with learners' positive performance should revisit the school vision.

5.4.4.2 Participatory leadership and positive communication

Participatory leadership as captured in this study simply means that everybody has a

share of leadership responsibilities. This is achieved through the head of department or the principal, who needs to recognise the expertise of others, irrespective of their position in the school. More collective decision making would assist teachers to understand role expectations in the collective realisation of the school's vision and mission. Mestry (2017) avers that principals should exhibit flexibility in sharing leadership duties, and clearly and skillfully match leadership duties with individuals who can perform them. In this regard, complexity theory is helpful. In essence, complexity theory exposes how different elements of a system relate to one another for the good of the whole. For example, lack of leadership affects every other component of the educational system, including proper management of the curriculum. Complexity theory would suggest that shared decision making can help schools alleviate some of their curriculum management challenges, such as the correct allocation of teaching resources, the way in which information is channeled to all teachers, and the degree of motivation the school maintains. The more informed each component of the system is about these aspects, the stronger and more resilient the system will be. Norwani, Yusof, Mansor and Daud (2016) attest that collaboration, sharing expertise and mentoring foster a collaborative culture, in which responsibilities and expertise are shared for learner success and educator development. Mentoring, teamwork and openness can boost the performance of all. Sebastian and Allenworth's (2012) model of instructional leadership is aligned with this approach. The success of this model is due to the fact that a variety of abilities and areas of expertise can augment the leadership abilities of the principal.

Positive and clear communication is an art and takes effort; it is not a natural mode of human behaviour (Arkadyevna, 2014). The starting point of positive communication is a positive intention. So, for learners' performance to improve, the teaching staff should have clear positive intentions regarding the goal at hand. Arkadyevna (2014) adds that positive communication is constructive, effective, supportive and coloured by positive emotions. This is the sort of communication that is central to collaborative or participatory leadership.

Participatory leadership is based on complexity theory which states that all stakeholders should work collaboratively for the benefit of learners. It clarifies that curriculum content should be unpacked so that meaning is clear to all participants. The principles of this theory need to be understood by all stakeholders, including learners, parents, school communities, teachers, principals, and officials of the circuits and districts. If these stakeholders worked collaboratively with one goal in mind, learners would definitely benefit. This collaboration would encourage and motivate team building which seemed lacking in the leadership observed in the sampled primary schools.

5.4.4.3 Recognition of the expertise of the other

Many stakeholders are involved in schools' functionality for the benefit of learners. Greater involvement by social workers would be of particular help, in terms of assisting learners and members of school staff with regard to the social and home issues that cause emotional and social problems. Police officers, too, are needed, on occasion, to help with safety and security issues in schools, while school district officials should offer more curriculum support to teachers and learners in schools. Alomes (2020) states that when it comes to creating a great school environment that fosters positive learning outcomes, one needs to pay attention to who gets to decide on the major issues, and by what means. Alomes is of the view that a recognition of the expertise of the other is helpful in this regard, since different stakeholders have different areas of expertise and can make things happen when all are given a voice, and when all respect and value the expertise of others. Greater recognition and space for multiple areas of expertise would lighten the load of those who have to manage and implement the curriculum, and this would benefit learners' performance.

According to the study findings, it is clear that teachers would like to be more involved in curriculum management and that their involvement would enhance outcomes for learners. They have a deep knowledge of what is happening in the classrooms regarding teaching and learning, as pointed out in Section 5.4.1. Owing

to the growing need for valid, knowledgeable inputs in administrative decisions from various organisational levels, it is of paramount importance to involve teachers in curriculum management (Gemechu, 2014). Enhanced participation in curriculum planning aligns with the collaborative model of instructional leadership and learner achievement proposed by Tienken in 2010. This model states that there are multiple leaders whose leadership activities are widely dispersed within and between organisations. The essence of this model is that the principal needs to be aware that other people have expertise that can be used as part of distributive leadership.

5.4.4.4 Analysis of resource and training needs of teachers (social interaction)

The school and the teachers need to perform a formal analysis of the resources and training needs of teachers. Such a process would enable teachers to manage systems, procedures, learners and resources to ensure that teaching and learning is effective and successful. The success of a school depends on whether teachers are empowered with skills, ability and access to resources in order to improve learners' performance through proper curriculum management.

The KZN Department of Education (2010) expressed that curriculum management is driven by four strategies at school level, namely: supervising the taught curriculum at classroom level, monitoring and evaluating curriculum implementation, providing support services and resources to teachers, and providing skills development training through in-service education and training of teachers. These core strategies are to be used together to improve learners' performance. To this the researcher would add that it is necessary to assist the school to check whether all efforts are directed toward the vision and mission of the school, which is the focus point for improving learners' performance.

The study has revealed that insufficient resources affect the management of the curriculum. The researcher is of the view that the needs analyses which forms part of the proposed model would assist schools with planning and deciding which resources are needed, some of which could be requested from neighbouring schools or

organisations. Support for teaching can also be augmented by rewarding teachers for effective teaching, in recognition of the truths of Weber's (1996) transactional theory. Contingent rewards, active management by exception, and passive management by exception should all play a part. Rewards for appropriate action and results would encourage teachers to own, account for and work towards improving their practices and empowering them as leaders. The researcher supports Mensah's (2016) observation that curriculum management as a system in schools needs a multidisciplinary perspective, as does its monitoring and evaluation. The effectiveness of teaching requires the effectiveness and efficiency of all systems in the school.

Documents were analysed as part of data collection in this study. The CAPS document stipulates the full daily work to be covered by teachers, in terms of what to teach and when to teach it. The Supervision Planner and Tracker is used by HoDs to supervise teachers and check whether they are on track with educational standards and expectations. The Structuring and Monitoring Conversation document details how heads of department are to monitor teachers through conversations regarding their teaching. There is also Jika iMfundo (a curriculum implementation tracker) which is used to try to improve learners' performance in primary schools. The analysis of documents revealed that some participants had the required documents, and some did not, which can lead to work not being done accordingly.

5.4.4.5 Support and monitoring

The teacher's job is to create structures that can benefit learners and to continue supporting and monitoring learners throughout the learning process. In the US, the NCLB Act relates to this finding as its focus is on instructional support and constant monitoring of learning. Schools should have reliable measures in place to show appreciation for teachers and to support them, as this is part of creating a culture of teaching and learning. Ozga (2003) mention three factors that impact the effectiveness of the organisation: The system needs to support the organisation's

overall direction; there should be regular reflection, evaluation and motivation, and teachers should receive ongoing development opportunities and support. Each of these is included in the proposed model for enhancing teacher involvement in curriculum management.

5.4.4.6 The system needs to support the organisation's direction

The absence of supervision and support in primary schools was recognised as a problem in the early years of the introduction of reception year classes in mainstream schooling in South Africa (Modise, 2017). Towler (2019) asserts that complexity theory has been applied in organisational settings to comprehend how effective organisations gain competitive advantage through leadership strategy and direction. Sethusha (2014) contends that workshops are conducted in all nine provinces in South Africa, the main purpose of which is to assist principals perform the tasks they are expected to perform, and to guide teachers and student teachers to support learners effectively and efficiently.

Effective curriculum management requires on-point, continuous development and support of teachers. Currently, the cascade model of workshops is not addressing needs at classroom level, and the lack of SMT support on content and pedagogical knowledge is affecting learners. There are also clear negative correlations between absenteeism on the part of teachers and learners, and learners' results. Adequate, rigorous, inclusive and continuous monitoring and supervising is seen as key in the successful implementation of any educational programme (Kayani, 2011). Support in curriculum management cultivates the leadership qualities of the principal and can enhance participatory leadership among teachers. Sebastian and Allenworth's (2012) model of instructional leadership is aligned with this observations, as it deals with an empirical archetype that reflects how leaders and groups together create organisational outcomes (Maponya, 2015). The success of this model depends on participatory leadership and the expertise of others to augment the leadership abilities of the principal.

5.4.4.7 Reflection, evaluation and motivation

Once all necessary steps have been taken to boost participatory leadership and enhance curriculum management, the school needs to reflect on its accomplishments and challenges. Ndambuki (2016) contends that monitoring and evaluation is a process that helps programme implementers to make informed decisions on future operations, service delivery and programme effectiveness, using objective evidence. Poole (2017) argues that good policies are designed to include monitoring of the impact of the policy and the progress of the programme of activities against their overall objectives. Evaluation of innovations must be linked with current classroom practices to enhance curriculum management in schools, with a focus on helping the school to achieve its objectives efficiently. This will involve linking job performance to valued rewards and ensuring that teachers have the resources needed to get the job done.

5.4.4.8 Teacher development and support

Teacher development and support makes a difference to what teachers do in the classroom, and what teachers do in the classroom is positively correlated with learner achievement. Ampiah (2010) showed that in Ghanaian primary schools, a high proportion of teachers are untrained, which has serious implications for the delivery of quality education to improve learners' performance in schools. Mensah (2016) revealed that since 2005, Ghana Education Services (GES) have been carrying out an in-service education and training policy for primary education. The aim is to establish the institutional structure for the continuous professional development of primary school teachers with the intention of improving learner performance in primary schools. This is aligned with Murphy's model, developed by Atkins and Murphy in 1990 (Atkins & Murphy, 2018) which proposes a framework of instructional leadership based on school efficacy and improvement, staff development and organisational change.

Based on all of the above considerations, the researcher proposes a model for increasing teacher involvement in curriculum management for the benefit of learners in primary schools. This model is shown in Figure 5.1.

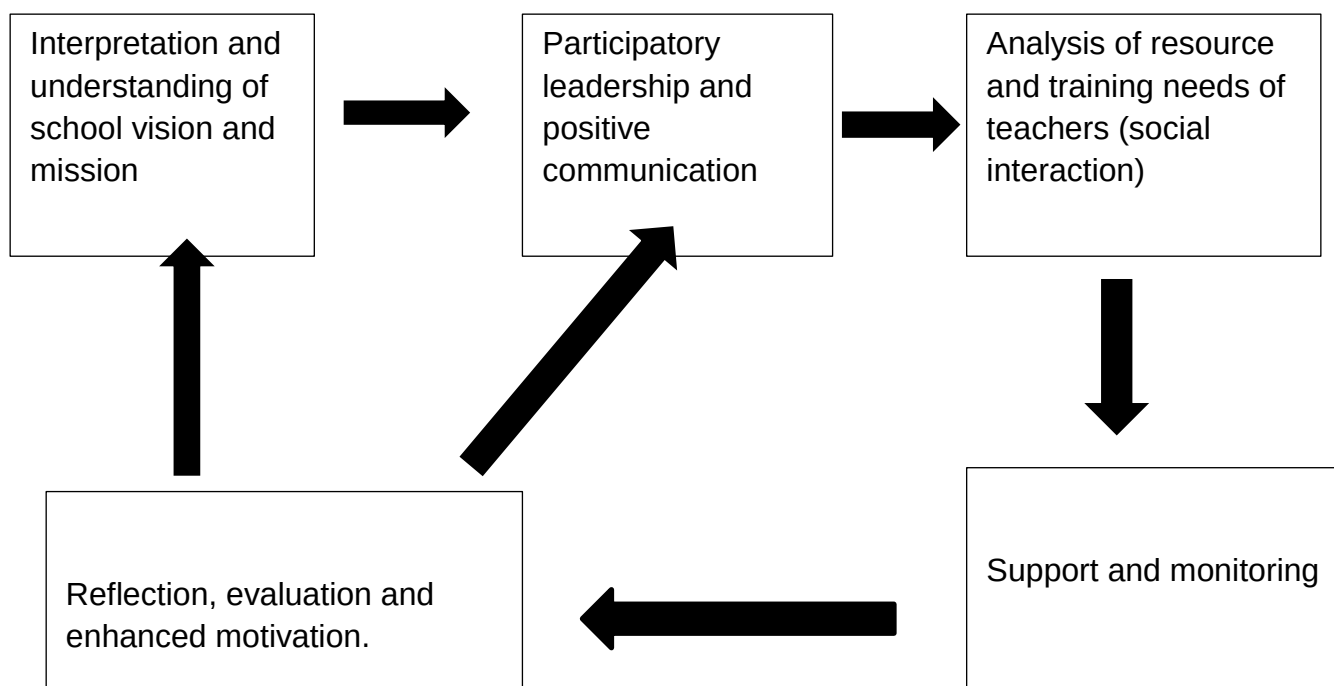


Figure 5.1: Proposed model for enhanced involvement of teachers in curriculum management

Source: Researcher (Z.C. Mpungose).

The proposed model shows the essentials that need to be present during the curriculum management process. Jacobs et al. (2016) state that a curriculum model guides the process of decision making and serves as a guideline to action.

5.5 Conclusions

The study was designed to investigate the views of HoDs and educators with regard to curriculum management for improving learners' performance in both rural and urban primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit. In this study, a number of aspects were raised that affect curriculum management and hence learners' performance.

This study made use of Weber's (1996) transactional model of human relationships

and motivation. This theory was used because its characteristics were seen to align with the study's aim. The characteristics of transactional theory are, firstly, *contingent rewards*, which have the potential to communicate both competence and control. The second characteristic is *active management by exception*, which states that the leader controls subordinates' activities to predict mistakes before they become a problem, and immediately takes corrective action when necessary. The third characteristic is *passive management by exception*, according to which a leader does not interfere until the problem becomes severe and demands action. Transactional theory was employed in this study because the managers of the curriculum are in charge of how curriculum matters are attended to. A good manager or leader, according to transactional theory, should be identified with the above characteristics.

The researcher used a qualitative approach in conducting this study, using interviews and document analysis as the tools for uncovering facts and viewpoints from HoDs and educators. She chose these participants because they fully understand curriculum management and its practices. Unstructured interviews, which have no boundaries for the interview process, were used by the researcher to obtain the information sought. These interviews allowed the participants to respond freely to questions and were very similar to normal conversations.

Once the interviews were over, the researcher summarised what she had heard based on common responses from the participants of the study. She transcribed the interviews, went through them several times, and classified the collected information into themes and sub-themes, which assisted with interpreting, understanding and drawing conclusions. The findings of the study revealed that the teachers should be involved in the curriculum management of their schools, because of their deep understanding of learners, as they interact with them daily. The findings of the study confirmed that each school should have a model it uses to manage the curriculum in a way that benefits the learners, and have strategies to deal with the challenges faced when managing the curriculum.

In this study, it was clear that only through cooperation could challenges be dealt

with. The curriculum managers of the school should work with the educators in managing the curriculum to help them reach their goal of improving learners' performance, using a participative style of leadership. Teachers can be of great assistance in managing the curriculum owing to their networking skills. Teachers from various schools normally meet in workshops and clusters, where they discuss the problems they come across in their schools. In their discussions, some may come up with solutions to common problems, since it is likely that any problem experienced by one will be shared by others. It is quite clear that teachers' voices are needed, and that their inclusion would greatly enhance the management of the curriculum and assist in improving learners' performance in primary schools.

5.6 Recommendations

This study aimed at exploring the views of HoDs and educators with regard to their role in curriculum management for improving learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit. The following recommendations are made.

5.6.1 Recommendations for exploring how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit

- (a) Teachers should be involved in curriculum management processes, owing to their deep knowledge and understanding of learners in classrooms.
- (b) Teachers as curriculum implementers should be invited to take part in managing the curriculum that they have to implement to learners. They should know exactly what is expected of them in advance, not just be given instructions to follow on something they are not sure of, and were excluded from during planning stages.
- (c) School leaders and curriculum managers should set clear and relevant objectives for each section of the curriculum to benefit learners.
- (d) There should be dedication to work by both leaders and teachers in order for

learners to progress from grade to grade.

(e) All teaching staff should schedule meetings to work collaboratively on improving learners' performance through enhanced curriculum management.

5.6.2 Recommendations for determining how curriculum management affects learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit

(a) All teaching and non-teaching staff in a school should work collaboratively, as a team, to help learners improve their performance.

(b) Teaching staff should display a positive attitude to learners, so that they are encouraged to be positive in relation to their own tasks, which should result in the improvement of their performance.

(c) Teachers need to set achievable learning objectives, aligning them with CAPS documents, for learners to achieve the intended goal, which is to improve their performance through curriculum management.

(d) Where learners' performance is not up to standard, or performance drops, teachers and their superiors need to examine the role played by the management of the curriculum. As soon as learners underperform, teachers should decide on ways to help them.

5.6.3 Recommendations for overcoming curriculum management challenges faced by educators in uMhlathuze Circuit

(a) Identify, in advance, the common challenges that are likely to hinder learners' performance.

(b) Try to prepare solutions to these challenges beforehand.

(c) Accommodate all learners with all their diversities in the school.

- (d) Approach the Department of Education to organise mobile classrooms when it is noticed that numbers of enrolment are increasing beyond the capacity of classrooms.
- (e) Encourage parental involvement in the schoolwork of their children in order to ease the educators' work.
- (f) Promote teamwork among learners and the school staff, so that learners can respond freely and positively to their schoolwork.
- (g) In the case of learners' underperforming, teaching staff should identify the challenges that prevent learners from performing well.

5.6.4 Recommendations for a curriculum model that may be used to improve learners' performance in primary schools

This study focused on curriculum management for improving learners' performance in primary schools. From the findings, useful recommendations can be made in terms of enhancing teachers' involvement in curriculum management. The recommendations are pertinent for school management teams, school leaders (principals), teachers and learners. Below is a description of the recommended model, which was noted from the findings as the best model to help improve learners' performance in primary schools.

An instructional model is recommended in this study as one that can accommodate every individual in a school. Instructional models are guidelines or sets of strategies on which the approaches to teaching by instructors are based. Gray (2020) contends that there are five types of instructional models. These are described below.

Direct instruction: This is a teacher-centred model in which learners learn from presentations or demonstrations by the teacher.

Indirect instruction: This one is learner-centred, and teachers act as facilitators while learners construct their knowledge.

Independent study: This type of instructional model promotes motivation and self-

regulation by providing learners with an opportunity to work at their own pace.

Interactive instruction: This is based on debates, role playing, panel discussions and other activities for learners in classrooms.

Experimental learning: This allows learners to conduct experiments, games, surveys, field observations and other activities for their learning.

The correct choice of instructional model can unite school leaders, teachers, and learners with shared goals, a shared understanding of how to reach the goals, and a shared vocabulary for discussing progress (Hubbell & Goodwin, 2019). A firm idea of the instructional model can indeed fix many school issues. Qais (2007) contends that an instructional model is a model whereby an instructor uses the available resources to meet learners' demand for knowledge transfer.

The following recommendations can enhance curriculum management in primary schools:

- (a) Existing research studies on curriculum management in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit indicates that there is still a gap in literature. There is a need for more research to be done to improve learners' performance in primary schools.
- (b) The Department of Basic Education should provide regular training for both school leaders and teachers on content knowledge for effective curriculum management, for the benefit of learners.
- (c) Teachers should participate in curriculum management activities because of their subject knowledge and implementation experience.
- (d) Monitoring of learners' work needs to be done by teachers regularly, in order for learners to improve their performance.
- (e) The classroom environment should be friendly and welcoming to learners in order to make them feel comfortable and motivated; they can then concentrate on their school work, and their performance might improve.

It would appear from the findings that a sound curriculum management model might not have been applied in the primary schools sampled. The proposed curriculum management model should be put into effect by all relevant stakeholders to help learners improve their performance. Teachers, especially, should perform this task.

5.7 Implications for further research

This study was limited to five schools in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. The researcher noticed that there is a gap in terms of effective curriculum management in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit, which can contribute to the fact that many are considered underperforming schools. There is a great need to help learners improve their performance. This needs a collaborative effort from all school staff. Further research could be conducted on HoDs' and teachers' views on what is needed in terms of the curriculum content, and how it should be managed in a way that boosts learners' performance.

5.8 Chapter summary

The chapter has summarised and concluded the research findings and presented recommendations for improving curriculum management in primary schools. The study objectives were to explore how curriculum management can improve learners' performance in uMhlathuze Circuit; to determine how curriculum management affects learners' performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit; to establish what curriculum management challenges are faced by educators in uMhlathuze Circuit; and to design a curriculum management strategy that may be used to improve learners' performance in primary schools.

The study has found that curriculum management is not practised in an optimum manner for improving learners' performance, and that many challenges, common to schools throughout South Africa, hinder its proper management, and hence its proper implementation. Challenges included poor school and class management,

overcrowded classrooms, the inclusion of learners with different needs, lack of parental involvement in their children's education and shortage of both LTSM and policy documents in schools. It has been shown that teachers desire greater involvement in curriculum management and that greater participation by teachers would enhance the way that the curriculum is implemented, for the ultimate benefit of learners.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Unstructured interview schedule

The following interview schedule will address objectives 1, 2 and 3:

SECTION A: How curriculum management improve learners` performance in primary schools in uMhlathuze Circuit Management

- Are teachers involved in the management of the curriculum in order to improve learners` performance?
- What are your objectives in improving learners` performance through curriculum management?
- How do you manage curriculum in a way can improve learners` performance?
- Do curriculum management accommodate all learners` needs in your school, including learners` with special needs?

SECTION B: How curriculum management affect learner performance

- Which model/s best work for you in your management of the curriculum to improve learners` performance? Why do you think it is the best model to you? Briefly explain your reasons.
- How do you embrace that model in order to keep learners` performance improving?
- What can you do to improve learners` performance if the model you feel worked for you no longer improve learners` performance in your school?
- Are you satisfied with the way curriculum management affects learners` performance in your school? Elucidate.

SECTION C: Challenges faced by educators in uMhlathuze Circuit Management.

- What are the challenges do you experience when managing the curriculum in your school?
- Are you able to overcome these challenges you experience? Elaborate.
- Do learners or other staff members give trouble you in your curriculum management process? Explain.
- What do you do to handle those challenges?

APPENDIX B: Document analysis sheet

The following research instrument will address objective number four: To ascertain if there is alignment in policy and practice with regard to curriculum management in schools.

Pseudonym:	
Name of school:	
Date:	
Duration:	
No. of learners:	

DOCUMENT ANALYSED	COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS
1. POLICY DOCUMENTS A. Are the following documents available: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), subject policy, language policy, admission policy and assessment policy	

2.SMT CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT FILES A.Is a strategic planning, entailing directions settings for the department, curriculum planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of instructional programmes available? B.Is instructional leadership plan, which includes developing and modelling effective strategies and evaluation strategies for assessing learning effectiveness available? C.Is the development plan for professionally developing teaching staff included? D.Are any resource management plans for selecting, preparing and organising teaching and learning found? E.Subject District Memo's F.Subject annual management plan G.Programme of assessments	
3. TEACHERS' FILES A. Are there any personal details for the teacher to see who really he or she is?	

B. Is the teacher's employment history available as to see if the teacher is able to work hard aligning to curriculum management and improve learners' performance available? C. Are the evidence for the qualification and specialisation of the teacher appear as to confirm that the teacher can improve learners' performance; or is the teacher teaches what she qualifies for? D. Is the proper planning for instruction and learners' assessments available? E. Are the instructional techniques and strategies available?	
---	--

APPENDIX C: Participant informed consent declaration informed consent declaration

(Participant: teachers)

Project title: **Curriculum management in improving learners' performance: A Case in uMhlathuze Circuit**

The researcher is registered for the PhD degree at the University of Zululand, Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to understand that curriculum management is meant to improve every learner's performance, irrespective of age, gender, race and their backgrounds; so teachers are supposed to play a vital role in curriculum management as they are the implementers of the curriculum.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the improvement of learners' performance through curriculum management in primary schools.
4. I will participate in the project by conducting interviews about curriculum management in improving learners' performance in primary schools.

5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. The following risks are associated with my participation: information disclosure and identification of the participants.
 - b. The following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: consideration of ethical issues.
 - c. There is no chance of the risk materialising.

APPENDIX D: Ethical clearance certificate

**UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**
(Reg No: UZREC 171110-030)



RESEARCH & INNOVATION

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Email: LundallN@unizulu.ac.za

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Number	UZREC 171110-030 PGD 2019/50						
Project Title	Curriculum management in improving learner's performance: A case of Primary Schools in uMhlathuze Circuit						
Principal Researcher/ Investigator	ZC Mpungose						
Supervisor and Co-supervisor	Dr H.R Mhlongo				Prof M.S Mabusela		
Department	Curriculum Studies						
Faculty	Education						
Type of Risk	Medium Risk – Data collection from People						
Nature of Project	Honours/4 th Year		Master's		Doctoral	x	Departmental

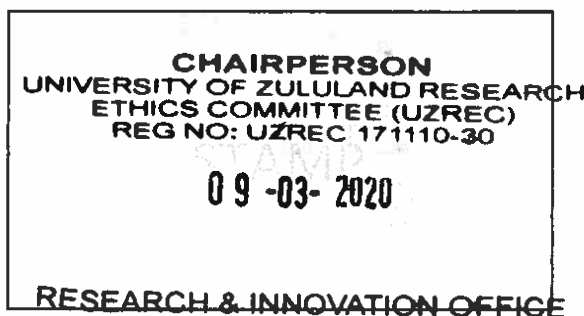
The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project. The Researcher may therefore commence with data collection as from the date of this Certificate, using the certificate number indicated above.

- Special conditions**
- (1) This certificate is valid for 1 year from the date of issue.
 - (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format [due date-09 March 2021]
 - (3) Principal researcher must submit a report at the end of project in respect of ethical compliance.
 - (4) The UZREC must be informed immediately of any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the meeting.

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting research.

Professor Mahlomaholo Geoffrey Mahlomaholo
Acting Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation

9 March 2020



APPENDIX E: CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that I have been responsible for the language editing of the doctoral thesis of Ms Zanele Carol Mpungose entitled: **CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN IMPROVING LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE: A CASE IN UMHLATHUZE CIRCUIT** in the department of *Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of Zululand, Kwa-Dlangezwa*.



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10 August 2021

CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN IMPROVING LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE: A CASE IN UMHLATHUZE CIRCUIT

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APPENDIX F: Permission granted to conduct research (KZN DoE)



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1063

Ref.:2/4/8/

Miss ZC Mpungose PO Box 23516

KwaDlangezwa 3886

Dear Miss Mpungose

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

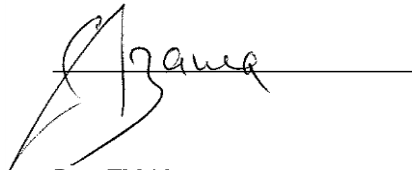
Your application to conduct research entitled: '**CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN IMPROVING LEARNER'S PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN UMHLATHUZE CIRCUIT**', in the KwaZulu-Natal

Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 30 September 2019 to 01 October 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full

report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.

10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal [Department of Education](#).



Dr. EV Nzama