

CHALLENGES FACING SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT IN CAPRICORN DISTRICT OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT: *The recent changes in Capricorn Education District have placed new external pressures on secondary school principals. The implementation of the new curriculum policy is fraught with challenges such as lack of physical resources, human resources, lack proper coordination at meso-level, lack of clarity on policy guidelines and other related problems. One of the major challenges is caused by principals who do not want to adhere to the principles of democratic values. This process requires them to involve all stakeholders in the decision making. To understand the total context of the challenges on the implementation of the curriculum, an in-depth study of this was made by means of empirical study and variety of other suitable research techniques. Data were collected by means of questionnaires and structured interviews from twenty secondary school principals in the area of the study. The study has revealed that policy implementation is not determined by one factor. It emerge that there are various factors that prohibit secondary school principals to manage and implement the new curriculum policy in their sphere of operation, hence the recommendations stated in this paper.*

KEYWORDS: Curriculum, School Management, Transformation Management, Effective Leadership, Principal.

INTRODUCTION

Recent social changes in the country have brought a lot of changes on the way in which public managers should implement new policies, secondary school principals in the Capricorn Education District are not excluded from the above mentioned challenge. One of the major challenges facing secondary schools principals in the Capricorn Education District is to implement the new curriculum introduced by the new democratic government after 1994. The new democratic South Africa has brought new education systems to eradicate the ills of that have been created by the former Apartheid regime.

One of the challenges faced by secondary school principals is to move from the old apartheid education policies into the implementation of the new policies developed by the new regime within the democratic order. The change of an education system did not only bring equal education to all learners in South Africa, it also brought some challenges in the implementation of the new curriculum due to lack of resources in some of the secondary schools. Most of the secondary schools in the former “black” designated areas there are no resources such as physical, well qualified human resources, and other related educational materials to assist the principals towards the implementation of the new education system.

Conceptual framework

In this study a review of relevant literature on the management and the implementation of the curriculum is discussed and analysed. Curriculum Models and theories can be used to support the management and the implementation of the new curriculum in South Africa. In order to have a profound understanding of the curriculum in South Africa, one has to link the curriculum theories at the micro-level. Some of these theories will be briefly discussed in the next section.

Curriculum and Learning Theories

A curriculum theory can be described as a system of ideas, opinions and conclusions concerning educative teaching. It involves scientific thought about the interrelationship between the origins, nature and meaning of teaching and learning. The main aim of the theory is not to describe, explain, understand and organize teaching and learning, but to yield results and conclusions that will have meaningful practical relevance for teaching and learning (Fraser, Loubster and Van Rooy, 1990: 19).

To support the above theory, Fraser *et al.* (1990: 22) classifies curriculum theories into four categories, namely: Hermeneutic theory, Cybernetic and Information Theory Models, Systems theory Models and Learning theory Models. If the above theories and models can be appropriately applied would assist the secondary school principals to manage and implement the new curriculum in their sphere of operation. For principals to implement the above curriculum, they need to understand the concept curriculum and its practice in the secondary schools.

Curriculum as a “concept”

Different definitions are given by different scholars to define what curriculum means. Some define curriculum as a broad concept which includes all planned activities that take place in a school (Carl, 2002: 223). It includes the subject courses which are taught during the normal hours of the school day. Carl (2009: 21) further states sees curriculum as “...*the sum total of the means of which a student is guided in attaining the intellectual and moral discipline requisite of the role of an intelligent citizen in a free society. It is not merely a course of study, nor is it a listing of goals or objectives, rather, it encompasses all of the learning experience that students have under the direction of the school. The curriculum is thus a broad concept that embraces all planned activities, and thus also subject courses that take place during ordinary school day. It also includes all after school planned activities such as social sports*”.

Wiles (2009: 2) argues that, curriculum is larger than what is simply “subject”, and also include extracurricular activities, lunch plays, sports and other non-academic activities also qualify as a part of the curriculum.). Motsiri (2008: 19) defines curriculum as ‘fixed courses of study’ terminology.

According to Marsh (1997: 4) curriculum is defined as a product, a document which includes details about goals, objectives, context, teaching techniques, evaluation, assessment, and resources. To support the above definitions Fullan (2009:40) refers curriculum as “the taught curriculum (implicit, delivered, and operational) where a teacher begins altering the curriculum teaching style. He further argues that this relates to hidden curriculum as well as received curriculum. Hidden curriculum refers to unintended learning curriculum while Received curriculum refers to things that students actually take out of classroom; those concepts and content that are truly learned and remembered” (Milondzo, 2003:15).

To support his definitions Majozi (2009: 12) refers hidden curriculum as the learned curriculum; the gap between what is taught and what is learned, “intended and unintended” (Fullan, 2009:133)

To support the implementation of the new policy, the Department of Education (DoE) provides the curriculum documents and prescribes ‘why’; ‘how’ and ‘what is to be taught; learning and experiences which a learner will encounter in the classroom as well as conceptual process and progress that should be made in the management of the new system.

Statement of the problem

Since the introduction of the new Curriculum, the availability of good resources is needed to enable the school principals to manage and implement the new system of education stated above in Capricorn Education District; particularly in the Polokwane cluster. Recent changes in the education policy have placed new external pressure and challenges on school principals to acquire good human and physical resources; in order to manage and implement the new education system. Most of the principals in Polokwane cluster are still faced with the challenges such as a lack of qualified staff, libraries, laboratories, stationary, study materials, good governance and other related problems to manage and implement the new education system.

Principals are expected to be curriculum leaders in the implementation of a curriculum in a school setting. Therefore, if curriculum planning is to be successful in a school, principals must have some degree of knowledge in the curriculum management and implementation. It appears that many school principals are currently lacking curricular and instructional expertise, hence, an investigation of challenges faced by principals in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement in Capricorn District of the Limpopo Province.

Objectives and research questions

In order to achieve the above aim, the following objectives were pursued:

- I. To identify challenges faced by principals in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).
- II. To find out about training programmes which are provided by the Department of Education to enhance the implementation of the new curriculum NCS in Polokwane Secondary Schools.
- III. To identify strategies which are used by the principals to improve the implementation of the NCS in Polokwane.
- IV. To identify factors which prevent principals to manage and implement the new curriculum in Polokwane.

With the above mentioned challenges, the following research questions arise:

- I. What are the challenges faced by school principals towards the implementation of the curriculum?
- II. What kind of challenges is faced by principals in the implementation of the curriculum?
- III. What kind of training does the department of education provide towards

management an implementation of the curriculum?

- IV. Which strategies are used by school principals to improve the management and implementation of curriculum?
- V. Why do principals struggle with the implementation of curriculum?

METHODS

Data collection and analysis

The information stated in this paper must be applied to a particular situation in order to get its relevance. The relevancy of the information was determined by the participants and accuracy of the data collected. The data in this paper is derived from twenty (20) structured questionnaires given to ten (10) female and ten (10) male secondary school principals working in Maraba and Maune circuit in Polokwane education cluster in Limpopo province. Interviews were also conducted with secondary school principals who are currently working in the area of the study.

Responses from both the interview and questionnaire were used to appraise the factors and challenges that prohibit the secondary schools principals in the implementation of a new curriculum in the area of the study. Twenty (20) structured questionnaires were distributed to ten (10) male and ten (10) female secondary school principals that were randomly selected and have longer experience in the department of education in the Limpopo Province.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis

The data obtained through questionnaire was statistically analysed through statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) version two. The researchers have received twenty (100%) responses from the entire respondents who were requested to participate in the study. The responses to questions (Q) are presented in the form of a table showing both frequencies (F) and percentages (%). The frequency (FX) reflected the total number of responses and percentages.

Q.1. indicates that seventeen (85%) of the principals are males. Only fifteen (15% are female principals. They were fewer female respondents because more males are promoted into the positions of the principalship in the secondary schools. The majority of female principals are still found in the primary schools.

In Q.2. Fifteen (75%) of the respondents were between thirty and fifty years of age, while five (25%) fell between the ages of fifty and sixty five (9255). The above information shows that most of the respondents are below the age of fifty (50). This implies that most of the principals have been recently promoted to the leadership role in the area of the study. Only twenty five percent (25) of the respondents have more experience and longer service.

In Q.3, The researchers obtained 20 responses from principals in the two abovementioned circuits in Polokwane education cluster. All the twenty respondents were each given a

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questionnaire to fill. Twenty questionnaires which were sent out to randomly selected principals were received back, which was hundred percent (100%) response rate.

Q.4. reveals that sixteen (80%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Three (15%) agreed with the statement, while one (5%) of the respondents recorded uncertain.

From these findings, it is evident that the majority of the respondents do not understand the relationship between education policy and curriculum development. Only few of the respondents claimed to understand the relationship between policy and curriculum development. The understanding of the relationship between education policy and curriculum development will help the secondary school principals to translate the theory into practice in their sphere of operation.

Q.5. Fifteen (75%) of the respondents disagree with the statement. Three (15%) of the respondents agreed; while one (5%) of the respondents recorded uncertain.

The above findings show clearly that most of the secondary school principals agree with the above statement that there is a lack of clarity on the policy guideline in the area of the study. Only few of them agreed with the statement. If the policy makers should have clarified the guidelines, the secondary school principals should have managed and implemented the new curriculum very well in the area of the study.

Q.6. Sixteen (80%) of the respondents confirmed that they have attended a short training on curriculum change and implementation. Three (15%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement; while one (5%) of the respondents recorded to unsure.

From the above information it is clear that most of the secondary school principals have attended in-service (IN-SET) training on NCS. This had a negative impact on the implementation of the new policy.

Q.7, Figure 1. Shows that sixteen (80%) of the respondents preferred to attend their IN-SET course at the university; while one (5%) of the respondents, wanted to attend the IN-SET course at circuit office.

It is evident from the findings that most of the respondents prefer to attend their NCS in-service training to be held at the schools to relate the policy into practice. As far as the management and the NCS policies are concerned, the principal should be delegated to organize the venue and implement the new policy at the micro-level.

Q. 8. Fifteen (80%) confirmed that they do not have enough teaching and learning materials. Three of the respondents (15%) claimed to have enough teaching and learning materials, while one (5%) recorded unsure.

From the above information, secondary school principals reveal that most of their schools do not have enough teaching and learning materials. This problem can hamper the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement

Q.9, figure 2. Shows that seventeen (85%) of the respondents do not have relevant physical resources. Only three (15%) claimed to have resources.

From these findings, it is evident that most of the secondary schools do not have relevant physical resources to support the implementation of the new curriculum.

Q.10. reveals that eighteen (90%) of the respondents preferred a leaderships style that fosters joint decision-making in the management and the implementation of curriculum. On the other hand, one, (5%) of the respondents chooses to be against the statement, while one (5%) recorded unsure.

The secondary school principals' leadership styles determine their success and achievement in their sphere of operation. Principals as managers have the primary task to foster joint decision-making with their management team and other stakeholders so as to enhance the management and the implementation of the New Curriculum Statement in the Capricorn Education District

Table 1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONCES ACCORDING TO GENDER

ITEM	F	%
Q.1. What is your gender?		
Female	3	15
Male	17	85
	FX = 20	100

Table 2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO AGE

ITEM	FRIQUENCY (F)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Q.2. Age in years		
30-40	6	30
40-50	9	45
51-65	5	25
TOTAL	20	100

Table 3: NUMBER OF PRINCIPALS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS PER CIRCUIT RANDOMLY SELECTED

SCHOOLS PER CIRCUIT Q3	NUMBER OF PRINCIPALS
Maraba Circuit	10
Maune Circuit	10
TOTAL	20

Table 4: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION POLICY AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

ITEM	F	%
Q.4. Do you understand the relationship between education policy and curriculum development		
1. Strongly Agree	1	5
2. Agree	2	10
3. Strongly Disagree	10	50
4. Disagree	6	30
5. Uncertain	1	5
	FX = 20	100

Table 5: POLICY GUIDELINES AND CLARITY

ITEM	F	%
Q.5. There is lack of clarity on policy guidelines in the area of the study		
1. Strongly Agree	10	
2. Agree	5	
3. Strongly Disagree	1	75
4. Disagree	2	10
5. Uncertain	1	5
	FX =	100

Table 6: COURSE ATTENDANTS AND CURRICULUM CHANGE

ITEM	F	%
Q.6. Have you attended a course on curriculum change in the last 3yrs?		
1. Strongly Agree	12	60
2. Agree	4	20
3. Strongly Disagree	2	10
4. Disagree	1	5
5. Uncertain	1	5
	FX = 20	100

BAR GRAPH

FIGURE 1: VENUE OF ATTENDANCE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Q.7. where do you want to attend the NCS in-service training?

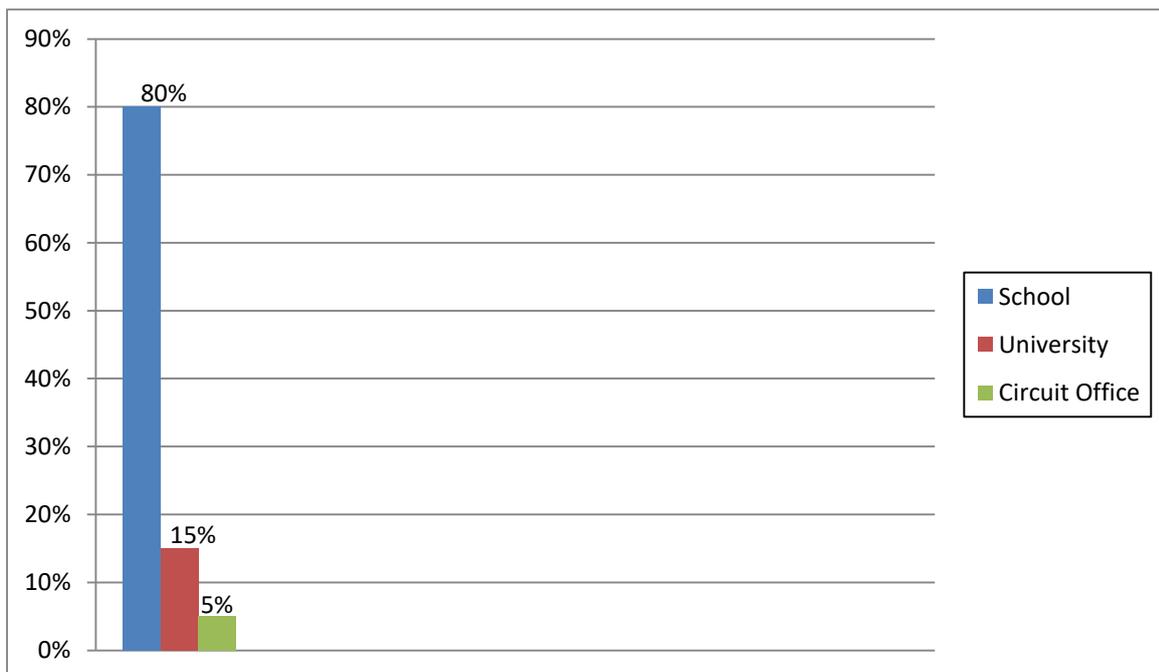


Table 8: TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

ITEM	F	%
Q.8. Do your secondary school has enough teaching and learning materials?		
1. Strongly Agree	1	5
2. Agree	2	10
3. Strongly Disagree	12	60
4. Disagree	3	20
5. Uncertain	1	5
	FX =	100

PIE GRAPH

FIGURE 2: NEW CURRICULUM AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Q.9. Do your secondary schools have relevant physical resources?

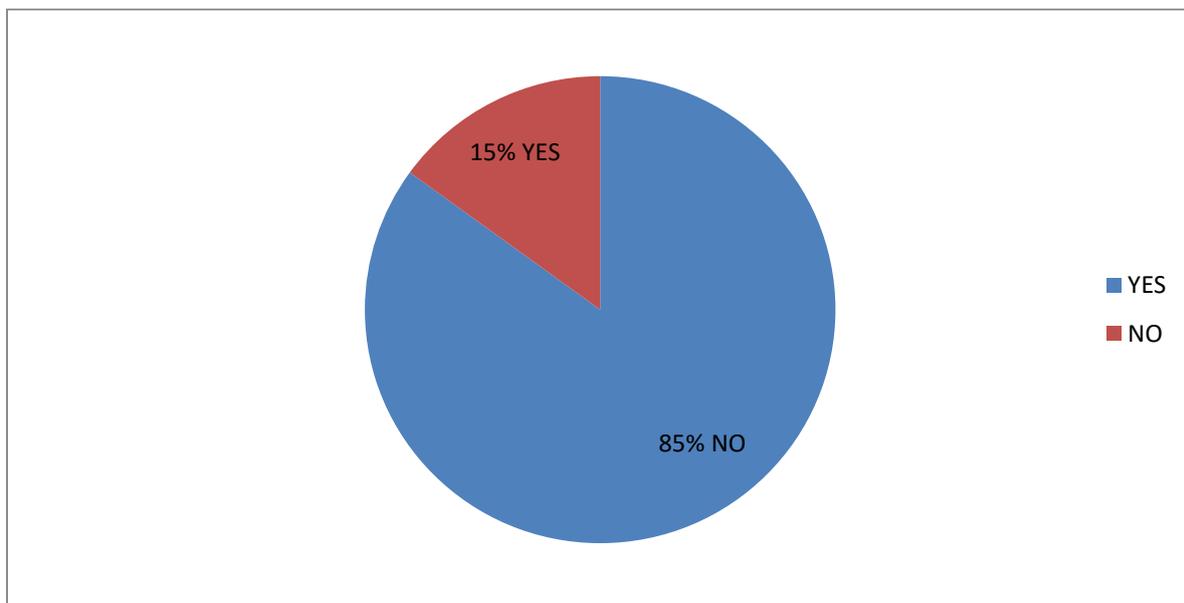


Table 9

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

ITEM	F	%
Q.10. Principals leadership style should foster joint decision making in management of curriculum implementation		
1. Yes	18	90
2. No	1	5
3. Unsure	1	5
	FX = 20	100

INTERVIEWS

Data Obtained from Structural Interview

In this section data was obtained through interviews from twenty (20) participants, that is ten (10) principals and ten (10) other members of the SMTs in the area of the study. The responses have given the researcher a clear picture about the situation and factors that hinders the implementation of the new curriculum in the Capricorn Education District.

The respondents revealed that the following factors below were acting as hindrances towards the implementation of the new curriculum:

I. Lack of proper policy guidelines.

Out of the twenty (20) respondents interviewed, eighteen of them indicated that they do not have clarity on policy guidelines and implementation.

II. Lack of physical resources in the rural schools.

Out of twenty interviewees, sixteen of them revealed that most of their schools do not have enough physical resources to support them in the implementation of the new curriculum

III. Lack of qualified human resource in the area of the study.

Out of twenty respondents, seventeen revealed that there were lack of qualified staff who could assist principals to manage curriculum implementation.

IV. Lack of staff development programmes and induction.

Fifteen out of twenty interviewees revealed that they were not properly inducted at their schools before new curriculum is implemented in their schools.

V. Lack of supervision and coordination.

Nineteen out of twenty confirmed that there is a lack of coordination and supervision in the implementation of the curriculum in the area of the study.

FINDINGS

The findings from both empirical study and structured interviews have revealed some important ideas and strategies that can be employed by School Management Teams, to enhance effective school leadership and performance in Capricorn Education District.

Findings from Empirical Research

- 80% of the respondents confirmed that there was a great deal of challenges related to the implementation of the New Curriculum (National Curriculum Statement) in the Polokwane education cluster.
- 76% of the respondents do not understand how school curriculum relates to an education policy in the area of the study.
- 90% of the respondents from the rural areas confirmed that there were not enough

resources to support school principals in the implementation of the curriculum in the area of the study.

- 80% of the respondents revealed that there was a lack of clarity on policy guidelines supplied by government officers.
- 70% of the respondents want the current education policy to be re-evaluated and modified.
- 76% of the respondents claimed that the quality of education in the new democratic South Africa has been severely affected by the introduction of the new system.

Findings from Structure Interview

In this section, data obtained through interview with the secondary school principals are presented. The responses for above form the above stakeholders have given the researcher a clear picture about the situation and the factors that hinder the school principals to manage and implement the new curriculum in the area of the study.

In this research the following themes were identified by the respondents as the main challenges that prohibit the management and the implementation of the new curriculum:

- Lack of clear policy guidelines
- Lack of physical resources.
- Lack of qualified human resource
- Lack of staff development and induction.
- Lack of supervision and coordination

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the bases of the findings from the empirical investigation and interviews, the following motivated recommendations are made:

- The department of education should be encouraged to minimise challenges that impact negatively towards the implementation of the curriculum in the area of the study.
- The department should be encouraged to clarify the relationship between education policy and school curriculum.
- The policy makers should be encouraged to supply relevant resources that will support the implementation of the new curriculum in the rural schools.
- The policy makers should be encouraged to clarify policies before implementation.
- The department of education should be encouraged to evaluate and modify the current education policy.
- The department of education should encourage and provide schools with relevant

physical resources to support principals in the area of the study.

- The department of education should be encouraged to appoint competent principals who will intern support the newly introduced curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to investigate the challenges of the secondary school principals in the implementation of the new curriculum in the Polokwane education cluster. The role of the school principals in the implementation of the curriculum Polokwane education cluster was left unattended for long time, hence this study. The factors that hinder the management and implementation of the new curriculum in Polokwane education cluster has been discussed in full in this paper; suggestions for the solution of the problems stated in this paper have been briefly discussed. The study is merely an eye opener for policy makers, school principals and other stakeholders. It is now their responsibility to look into the researcher's ideas and recommendations for possible ways to improve the management and implementation of the study.

Further, the retraining of the principals is needed so as to implement the new curriculum in a professional and competent manner. Both the principals and the government officials at the district level need to be empowered in order to improve the management and the implementation of the new curriculum, not only in Polokwane education cluster, but Limpopo province in particular and South Africa as a whole.

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