Chapter 1
Curriculum Management in KZN Rural High Schools:
Enablers and Constraints

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the curriculum management enablers and constraints experienced by school principals in KZN rural high schools in King Cetshwayo. A survey research design of the exploratory sub-type was adopted. The findings reveal a lack of parental involvement, increased principals' workload due to multi-faceted responsibilities, difficulty recruiting suitably qualified teachers, lack of teacher development opportunities for teachers, poor infrastructure and facilities, curriculum delivery challenges, curriculum monitoring, and evaluation. The identified deficiencies in curriculum management are linked to the instructional leadership led by the principals.

BACKGROUND

Many curriculum changes have taken place in South Africa, especially after the 1994 democratic elections. The people at the forefront of implementing those changes are principals of schools working together with their School Management Teams (SMT) and teachers. However, more is expected from the Principal as they are the leaders of the School Management Team (SMT). As a result, they are expected to direct and monitor the work of the SMT and encourage a shared vision among all the staff members. Teachers see principals as the custodians of curriculum changes; as a result, principals are expected to communicate and provide the resources needed to successfully implement the curriculum changes (Van Wyk, 2020). It's not only teachers and learners that are involved in curriculum matters, community and parents also need to be involved. However, for principals to deliver their duties effectively, they need to

have deep knowledge on curriculum standards, sufficient curriculum knowledge, and strategies on how to improve learner achievement (Dayson, 2016).

Research has shown that it is the leadership and management in schools responsible for preventing curriculum change initiatives from being successful, especially in the South African context (Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren, 2007). The authors further suggest that this could be related to the issue that the appointment of principals, based on their learners' good results, does not guarantee that principals will be good at leading schools, let alone implement curriculum changes. Therefore, additional measures need to be implemented by the employer "to strengthen the type of candidates who are being appointed as principals as interviews alone are insufficient" (Van Wyk, 2020:164). Furthermore, Van der Westhuizen (2015) argues that a school's management and leading requires an individual with specialised skills and knowledge, as teaching experience alone is not enough for one to be a successful principal. Therefore, principals must be trained in educational management and leadership. Additionally, Zuze and Juan (2020) view it as necessary that principals get training in different programmes such as implementing policies and raising the academic standards in schools. So, the way principals are appointed must be looked at and for newly appointed principals to get support in the form of training to deliver on their mandate.

In the updated Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship, one of the core responsibilities of a principal is that of being a curriculum leader, manager, and evaluator (RSA, 2016). The Policy further highlights the five main kinds of leadership that principals have to execute: strategic leadership, executive leadership, instructional leadership, cultural leadership, and organisational leadership. As an instructional leader, the Principal, amongst other things, is expected to" lead continuous improvement in curriculum implementation" (RSA, 2016: 11). So, from the updated Policy, the role of the Principal as far as curriculum management is concerned is very clear, and that shows the critical role that the Principal has to play in curriculum management. Other core functions of the principals' duties as set out by PAM include policy enactment and the management of teachers, learners, information, infrastructure, and school discipline (Zuze & Juan, 2020). As much as the responsibilities of the principals are known, however, research by Msila (2010) indicates that many rural schools' principals find educational changes to be more challenging than their urban counterparts. Therefore, they find it hard to maintain such changes.

Lack of parental involvement is one of the issues often complained about when it comes to rural schools. Du Plessis and Meistry (2017: S2) characterise rural parents in the South African context as "mostly do menial work, have a lower level of education, and usually do not attach much value to schooling." Additionally, (Ramnarain, 2014: 66) observes that they are also "generally poorly educated and have low paying jobs." Therefore, it becomes a challenge for the parents in rural schools to provide their children's learning needs. That is also exacerbated by the fact that the schools are "in communities with a low socioeconomic profile" (Ramnarain, 2014: 66). Thus, parents don't have much to offer. Du Plessis & Meistry (2017: S2) further argue that the lack of parental involvement in rural schools can be because "many parents are unwilling to invest as they are uncertain about the quality or value of their children's education" as there are few educated role models in rural areas. Therefore, it becomes difficult for principals to effectively manage curriculum as one of the essential stakeholders in the school setting, i.e., parents are not fully involved and do not support both the teachers and their children.

Based on the above observation, background, and insight from the South African researchers on the roles of the Principal as a leader, manager, and evaluator of curriculum, and the peculiar challenges rural principals are faced with, the current chapter aims to explore both the enablers and constraints concerning Curriculum Management in KwaZulu Natal rural High Schools.

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