Chapter 10

School Management Teams' Strategies to Enhance Curriculum Delivery in the Era of the COVID–19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The uncertainty of how the curriculum is supposed to be delivered in schools during COVID-19, which is different from traditional practices, was a global challenge. This chapter seeks to explore school management teams' strategies to enhance curriculum delivery in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this qualitative chapter, transformative learning and quality management theories, purposive sampling techniques, and the interpretive paradigm were employed. In addition, data collected from semi-structured interviews were thematically analyzed and discussed to give conclusions and recommendations. This study found that despite the existing policies such as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy System (CAPS) and the National Policy for Assessment (NPA) on planning and implementing curriculum delivery in schools, school management teams (SMTs) found it difficult to execute their duties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the study suggests annual in-service training for departmental heads (Dh) and deputy principals (Dp) on planning and implementing curriculum in schools.

INTRODUCTION

Under normal circumstances, the delivery of the school curriculum is one of the goals that the Department of Basic Education may not breach. According to South Africa's Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC, 2003), the school management team (SMT), which consists of the principal, the deputy principal (DP), and departmental heads (D.H.s), is responsible for the successful implementation of the school curriculum. The SMT needs to work effectively to deliver the curriculum in schools, and the

role played by D.H.s and D.P.s in successful curriculum delivery is especially important. However, the delivery of school curricula worldwide was threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools were forced to close during lockdowns, which affected the operations of regular schools. The purpose of the study reported on in this chapter was to explore how SMTs planned and implemented alternative curriculum delivery methods during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following questions were formulated: What is the role of the SMT in schools' curriculum delivery? What do curriculum planning and implementation for successful curriculum delivery in a school environment mean? What challenges are faced by SMT members regarding planning and implementing the curriculum in schools? What strategies can the SMT employ to mitigate the disruption of curriculum delivery in schools?

Background

The traditional way of teaching and learning in South Africa and other parts of the world was destabilised by the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers had to re-think to find alternative ways of planning and implementing curriculum in schools. As a result of the lockdown, most countries, including South Africa, decided to shut down schools as the government flattened the curve and controlled the transmission of the diseases (Sintema, 2020). When the government decided to reopen the schools, most schools resorted to technology for teaching and learning (Dhawan, 2020). This implies that the departmental heads and deputy principals in schools had to find innovative ways to plan, implement, and manage curriculum delivery in schools using various technology.

Globally, approximately 1.725 billion learners from pre-primary schools to institutions of higher learning in 200 countries were affected by the COVID_19 pandemic (United Nations, 2020). Schools, mostly in rural areas and in townships, faced various challenges regarding planning, implementation, and management of curriculum delivery. The pedagogy to employ in teaching became a challenge since face-to-face contact sessions were no longer feasible but online. Some of the challenges include the learner-teacher ratio in class, as most of the classes are overcrowded. To adhere to social distancing, online teaching became an alternative mode of curriculum delivery. Therefore, the demand for new strategies to plan and implement curriculum delivery escalated everyday to ease teachers' and learners' burden.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed for this chapter focuses on the theories underpinning the study; the role of SMTs in schools' curriculum delivery. Curriculum planning for successful curriculum delivery in a school environment; the challenges faced by SMT members when curriculum delivery in schools is planned. And, lastly, strategies employed by SMTs to mitigate the disruption of curriculum delivery in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Theoretical Framework of the Study

Theories are used in research to frame the perception and interpretation of a specific phenomenon (Strayhorn, 1993:10). The transformative learning theory and total quality management (TQM) theory are the foundation of this chapter (Mezirow, 2009; Deming, 1986; & Mezirow' s (2009). Initial research into transformative learning has led him to theorise that adults' understanding does not change when

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