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EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT IN MIXED CLASS OF LEARNERS: CASE OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VHUMBEDZI CIRCUIT

(Research article)

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Abstract

This study investigated the management of teaching and assessment of the "qualified to be progressed" learners (QP) for quality learning and teaching. Mixed methods approach was adopted. Random and purposive sampling were used to select teachers and School Management Team (SMT) member respectively who formed the study sample. The study was conducted in 10 purposively selected secondary schools in the Vhumbedzi Circuit, Limpopo, South Africa. Data was collected from the 165 selected teachers through the use of questionnaires while interviews were conducted for 10 SMTs. The quantitative data was analysed using percentage, while the qualitative data was coded and thematically analysed. The finding of the study showed that there are no clearly developed strategies to help manage the teaching and assessment of the QP learners. The study recommends that the DBE, through its curriculum section, should assist the SMTs in the development of strategies to help manage the teaching and assessment of the QP learners for quality teaching and learning.

Keywords: QP learners, School Management Team (SMT), Vhumbedzi Circuit

1. Introduction

During the apartheid era, the education system for black people faced infrastructural shortages. This deprived black learners of equal opportunities to quality education. It bred a culture where learners were progressed as long as they consistently attended school, with little or no regard over how they performed. This continued even after 1994, notwithstanding the educational reforms introduced after the country became a democracy (Kader, 2012). The shortage of classrooms and other related infrastructure led to overcrowding and large classes, and hence the high failure rate due to poor teaching and learning conditions. It should be noted that half of the South African learners who start grade one do not complete grade twelve (DBE, 2015). An explanation for this could be the high dropout rate which is caused by poverty and bad schooling conditions, inter alia. Most do so without having achieved an exit qualification such as the National Senior Certificate (NSC). The poor performance by learners has become a cause for concern in government as it gets worse and worse every year. Thus, there is a need to urgently mitigate against this dilemma. Currently, learners are only allowed to repeat each grade once. Consequently, learners are automatically promoted to the next grade if they have already repeated the previous one without even passing it in their second attempt (DBE, 2016). According to Stott, Dreyer and Venter (2016), the progression policy, which restricts grade

repetition, has only been implemented in the FET phase since coming into effect in 2013. The first such progressed learners did Grade 12 in 2014.

In view of the problems bedevilling basic education in South Africa, suffices it to note that learners' performance should be prioritised by all those concerned with their education. That is, schools are expected to do everything possible to help learners succeed regardless of whether they are progressed or not. Meanwhile, the progression policy states that a learner may only be retained once in each phase in order to prevent him/her from continuously repeating one phase more than necessary (DBE, 2012). The progression policy is intended to minimise unnecessary school dropout. The idea here is for the schooling system to afford every learner the opportunity to attain an exit qualification such as the NSC. That is why, therefore, learners are progressed from either Grade 10 to 11, or from Grade 11 to 12 respectively (DBE, 2016).

The principle that informs this policy is centred on the need for learners not to spend more than four years doing the same phase, without any hope of progressing to the next level of their studies. Hartley (2006) stated that schools have no power to prevent the learners' promotion to the next grade even if they do not meet the required standards for promotion. Hartley (2006) added that if a learner has been progressed before, she/he, as a matter of principle, automatically qualifies to be progressed to the next grade as well. The assumption is that the learner could be assisted to acquire the necessary content that she/he lacks. Of major concern here is that the progression policy is silent on how learners who have been progressed should be taught and assessed. It also does not offer any strategies that should be applied in order to effectively support the teaching and assessment of such learners. Conversely, the Education Circuits throughout the country are mandated to advance the implementation of quality education in order to help improve the learners' performances at school. Vhumbedzi, one of the circuits in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, has not been performing well in terms of standards set at the district level. There were assumptions that the cause of poor results was the progression of several learners to higher grades.

Regardless of the significant strides that have been made over the past four years towards preventing learners from being retained in the same phase for longer than four years, the disparities between high performing and low performing learners are pronounced (DBE, 2016). In an attempt to close this performance gap, the teaching and assessment of these learners has become complicated for teachers as they are supposed to have separate time teaching "the qualified to be progressed learners" alone. On that account, managing the teaching and assessment of "the qualified to be progressed" learners have become strenuous for them. It cannot be disputed that the accomplishment gap between the promoted learners and the progressed ones needs to be narrowed if we are to reduce the high failure and dropout rates in the Vhumbedzi Circuit. In order to succeed, there should be a systematic, focused and undivided attention in managing the teaching and assessment of the qualified to be progressed learners. Hence, the reason for this study which attempts to explore teachers' management of teaching and assessing mixed class learners using selected schools in Vhumbedzi Circuit. In order to achieve the aim of this study, attempt is made to proffer answer to the question guiding the study: How is teaching and assessment in mixed class of learners (progressed and promoted) managed in selected secondary schools in Vhumbedzi Circuit?

2. Methodology

The study employed mixed methods approach. This was to ensure triangulation of data. Kumar (2019) supports the adoption of mixed method approach in a study to enhance triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. The study sample comprised 145 participants: 135 teachers and 10 SMTs. The sample was considered to get diverse opinions from different

levels of management. Random sampling was used to select the teachers who were respondents in the study. Meanwhile, purposive sampling was used to select the secondary schools and the SMTs who participated in the study. Data was collected from the selected teachers through the use of questionnaires while interviews were conducted for the SMTs. The quantitative data was analysed using percentage, while the qualitative data was coded and thematically analysed. The quantitative and qualitative results are presented and discussed using various themes as given in the results part below.

3. Results

The results of the study are presented under each related table as follows:

Table 1: Respondents' personal information

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Male	70	51.9
Female	65	48.1
Age Range	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
25-35	14	10.4
50-65	31	31.0
Qualification	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
M+2	1	0.7
M+3	26	19.3
M+4	84	62.2
M+5	24	17.8
Teaching Experience	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
0-5 years	22	16.3
6-20 years	80	59.3
21-36 years	33	24.4
Position Held	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
School Principal	8	5.9
Deputy Principal	5	3.7
HOD	26	19.3
PL 1 Educator	96	71.1

Table 1 shows that 51.9% of the respondents were males, while 48.1% females. The table further shows that 66.6% were teachers within the age range of 36–49, 10.4% were between 25 and 35 years, while those between the ages of 50 and 65 constituted about 31% of the respondents. Additionally, during the phase of qualitative data collection, 10 SMTs were interviewed. Of these, only one principal was a female aged 48. The rest were males whose age range was between 48-55 years.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows that the respondents who offer subjects in the FET phase are qualified, with 80% of them with qualifications above Grade 12, plus three years in an institution of higher learning. This is an indication that most of the teachers who teach in this phase have relevant subject content knowledge. Only one respondent has Grade 12 and a two-year teacher training qualification. With regards to experience, Table 1 shows that 59.3% of the respondents have a teaching experience of between 6 and 20 years. This implies that the majority of the teachers are somewhat experienced to manage the teaching and assessment in a class of learners with different cognitive levels. Those with experience of between 0 and 5 years made up 16.3% of the respondents. Teachers in this category may need a lot of support from the SMTs as they lack the experience to teach at the FET phase and manage the teaching

and assessment of the "qualified to be progressed" learners effectively. The respondents with the long teaching experience were those with between 21 and 36 years, and these made 24.4%. This category of teachers may be helpful in supporting the less experienced ones in managing the teaching and assessment for quality teaching and learning.

Table 1 also shows that majority of the respondents (71.1%) are post level one teachers. It should be noted that 19.3% of the HODs are members of SMTs that offer subjects in Grade 12. Only 3.7% and 5.9% of the respondents are principals and deputy principals respectively. These also teach Grade 12 learners. This implies that 9.6% of the respondents are SMT members with the administrative responsibility of making sure that the teaching and assessment of the QP learners is properly managed. In addition, these SMTs also monitor and support teachers in managing the teaching and assessment complexities of the QP learners for quality learning and teaching. However, looking at the number of the HODs at these schools, one may conclude that the supervision of teachers may not be that effective. This suggests that teachers do not receive enough support on how they should manage the teaching and assessment in a class of learners with different cognitive levels.

3.1. QP versus assignments and project activities

Table 1: The rate of assignments and project activities given to the learners

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	36	26.7
Seldom	16	11.9
Sometimes	36	26.7
Often	27	20.0
Always	20	14.5
Total	135	100

The library helps the school to meet its targets and goals in order to improve the learners' performances (Saraswat, 2018). Results in **Table 2** shows that a little more than a quarter (26.7%) of the respondents do not give the learners assignments and projects, while14.6% consistently do so. These results are inconsistent with Saraswat's (2018) observations that libraries facilitate the teachers' work and help learners understand what is taught to them, in addition to providing them with a lot of opportunities to access resources for the desired information.

During the interviews, the principals revealed that their school libraries are not adequately resourced. They indicated their frustrations with the lack of resources to support the management of teaching and learning, especially the lack of critical reference facilities such as libraries. In the absence of libraries, learners find it difficult to refer to other relevant sources when doing assignments and projects. Nine SMTs indicated that they do not have libraries in their schools. Principal D remarked thus:

"We do not have a school library that provides our learners with opportunities to consult relevant reading materials. We converted one classroom into a reading and study room. This room accommodates different classes. This is an unhealthy set-up in the context of our learners taking us seriously. We urgently need a well-resourced library as the former is not well resourced with books. When we give the QP learners extra work, they do not have anywhere to go for relevant sources".

This is an indication that learners are not fully supported in teaching and learning due to the lack of well-resource libraries. There is, therefore, a probability that learners may be assessed while not fully prepared content wise. If the QP learners are not given assignments and projects where they should utilise the library, they are negatively impacted academically. This leads to

them performing poorly during assessments. Schools need libraries to help learners do extra reading to improve their knowledge.

3.2. QP and Laboratory Experiments in Science Subjects

The table 3 shows the rate at which learners do science experiments in the laboratory.

Table 3: The rate at which learners do science experiments in the laboratory

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	69	51.1
Seldom	6	4.4
Sometimes	31	23.0
Often	14	10.4
Always	15	11.1
Total	135	100

Table 3 results indicate that more than half (51.1%) of the respondents do not give their learners work that requires doing experiments in the science laboratory. This does not auger well with Mji and Makgato's (2006) assertion that laboratory sessions are important because practical work brings to life what is explained theoretically. In schools where there are laboratories, learners complement what is in the textbook with experiments. Conversely, learners who do not do experiments in the laboratory are negatively affected in their academic performance.

This may also result with many progressed learners failing to cope with the science subjects' content. The interviewees here indicated that they find it difficult to teach science subjects without conducting experiments. When teachers combine classroom teaching with laboratory experiments, learners are holistically prepared for their Grade 12 final examinations. The majority of the respondents confirmed that the bulk of their QP learners do science subjects. Thus, the unavailability of science laboratories in their schools is a drawback to their quest to improve their learners' academic performances. The respondents also revealed that without science laboratories, both the promoted and QP learners perform poorly in science subjects. This was aptly put by principal B thus,

"Our teachers are unable to do science experiments as we do not have laboratories to enhance our learners' knowledge of science. Unfortunately, our school does not even have a science kit for use by our teachers and learners during practical work".

Onwu (1999) added that the laboratory enables learners who struggle to respond to high order questions, especially the QP learners, to improve higher order learning skills such as analysis, problem solving and evaluating. Johnstone and Al-Shuaii (2001) established that a science laboratory provides a meaningful context for learning. Given the importance of laboratories as outlined above, it is apparent that their lack thereof in this circuit is a cause for concern. Principal E resignedly said of the situation,

"It is difficult to teach science at this school as we do not have laboratories. How can learners pass physical science if they do not do their practical work in a school lab? Many of the QP learners do Physical Science and Mathematics. We urgently need laboratories to help them in this respect".

The above statements by these respondents are an indication that the lack of an important facility such as a science laboratory also contributes to large numbers of the QP learners who fail science subjects. Schools in the Vhumbedzi Circuit, therefore, require state of the art

science laboratories if we are to see a reduction in the number of learners who are progressed to the next grade.

3.3. QP Projects for Computer Laboratory

Table 4 indicates the rate at which learners are given projects that should be done through the use of a computer laboratory.

Table 4: The rate at which teachers give projects that enable learners to use computer laboratory

Scale	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Never	61	45.2
Seldom	16	11.9
Sometimes	29	21.5
Often	22	16.3
Always	7	5.1
Total	135	100

Table 4 shows that 45.2% of the teachers never give their learners projects that force them to use computer laboratories. This implies that the QP learners are not exposed to vast stores of information (the internet) to enrich their basic knowledge. In contrast, 5.1% of the respondents indicated that they always give their learners projects to do through the use of the computer laboratory. The large discrepancy in percentages is symbolic of the poor management of the learners' projects in the context of their access to computers. It suggests that the education systems as undertaken in this circuit denies learners the opportunity to get additional information through the use of computers. Omenyo (2016) states that the use of computer laboratory allows for flexibility in one's teaching style, with the added bonus of promoting responsiveness to the variations of teaching methods that are available and promoted through the internet system. One of the principals (G) confirmed that they do not have a computer laboratory in their school, and this makes it difficult for the learners to access information through the computer. His views were that

"As a school, our learners do not have access to information from the internet to enrich their knowledge. The school has only one computer that is used by all of us to type tests and other administrative tasks. If one checks with the teachers, one would realise that most of them use their own laptops for school work as well as to access information from the internet. Emails from the DBE are received through personal laptops".

In view of the above, lack of resources has profound effects on teaching and learning support urgently needed by learners to improve their performance. Given this dire situation, schools are forced to adhere to the progression policy without their QP learners academically qualifying. To support the teaching and learning processes, computer laboratories are a must in secondary schools. Their necessity lies in that they aid interactive classroom activities. Thus, these should be provided to schools by the DBE to enable learners to access information through the internet.

3.4. Period Attendance Register

In Table 5, data on how teachers mark their period attendance register is presented.

Table 5: The rate at which period attendance register is being controlled

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	3	2.2
Seldom	2	1.5
Sometimes	18	13.3
Often	34	25.2
Always	78	57.8
Total	135	100

The progression policy stipulates that for a learner to be progressed, she/he must have attended the school on a regular basis, and that she/he must not be absent from school for more than twenty days (DBE, 2016). **Table 5** shows that of the entire population sample that completed the questionnaire, 57.8% mark their period attendance registers whenever they go to a different class to monitor how learners attend each lesson. This speaks to Bhengu and Mkhize's (2013) assertion that it must be a common practice for teachers in schools to sign period attendance registers when they go to different classes. Also, principal D concurred with Bhengu and Mkhize's (2013) point, adding that, "We mark period attendance registers to gather information on learner attendance during school teaching periods". Principal D's comment was corroborated by principal A's, who remarked that, "*We mark learner class attendance using the period attendance registers*", adding, "*We almost mark and record all those learners who always attend classes and those who dodge them*".

This illustrates that it is easy for teachers in different schools to confirm how learners were attending school when making decision if a learner qualifies to be progressed to the next grade based on the QP policy on learner attendance. The marking of the period attendance register as shown above serves as proof that the majority of the schools are committed to the use of period attendance registers as a monitoring tool in this respect. With only 3% of the respondents showing that they never mark their period attendance registers whenever they go to different classes, the results reveal that the majority of teachers mark the period attendance registers as is one of the requirements in the policy governing school attendance monitoring. Thus, the QP learners' academic performance should improve, unless teachers themselves are not serious here.

3.5. School Timetable

Table 6 shows that the majority of the respondents (83.7%) follow the school master time table as they teach. This is consistent with Ellen (1996) who contends that the school master timetable is an essential plan in a school that shows the daily allotment of time among several subjects and activities in different grades. With only 0.7% of the respondents admitting that even though schools have general time tables, some teachers never follow them in their teaching, we may conclude that the majority of the schools here use the school's master timetable to monitor the teachers' movements in and out of classrooms.

Table 6: Indication of how teachers follow the school time-table

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	1	0.7
Sometimes	5	3.7
Often	16	11.9
Always	113	83.7
Total	135	100

The principals agreed, adding that as school SMTs, they use the master time-table to monitor the teachers' movements at school during working hours. Principal F explained that

when he wants to visit a class to assess the teaching and learning process, he checks the master time-table from which he develops his own class visits timetable. The principal added that this helps him identify which subject is taught in which classroom and at what time, and who teaches that. Principal G summed this thus, "The master timetable helps us to plan and group learners according to their learning abilities to ensure that when teachers go to those classes, they are able to plan for each subject effectively".

Given the fact that schools are able to design the master timetable as indicated above by the principals, the only issue that may be lacking here is the management of teaching and assessment according to the plan. Unless teachers are taught on the strategies to implement their plans, the QP learners may continue to underperform. In this regard, principal H pointed out that in their school, the effective teaching of the challenging subjects such as Mathematics and Life Sciences requires that they be allocated extra time in the master time-table. Ellen (1986) contends that the school master timetable helps adjust the school work according to the learners' needs. This sentiment is in tandem with what principal H said in this regard,

"When the master timetable is drawn, we make provision for the extra time needed for certain subjects that are presumed difficult to the QP learners. For example, in the mornings, teachers have extra periods to teach the QP learners only, focusing on topics that are difficult to them".

Pinzow (2016) acknowledged that for the proper management of teaching and learning, there should be a master time-table that caters for different periods at school. The school master time table helps ease confusion at school as it stipulates exactly what is to be done at what time. It also provides the SMT with the latitude to increase the contact time, provided there is a need for that. It thus directs the attention of both the learner and the teacher to one lesson at a time.

3.6. Study Time-Table: All Grades

Table 7: How study time tables for all grades are developed

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	16	11.9
Seldom	7	5.2
Sometimes	23	17.0
Often	16	11.9
Always	73	54.0
Total	135	100

Results in Table 7 indicate that 54.0% of the respondents developed the study time-table for their grades. This is to make sure that learners are always engaged with their studies. This is in line with Corallo and McDonald's (2002) position that the NSC demands that learners should have a lot of work to do on their own at their own time where they may get information from other sources related to their subjects. The SMTs added their voices here as well. They are of the belief that the study timetable is one of the strategies used to support learners who were progressed without making the grade. The respondents also emphasised that it is important for the QP learners to prioritise their time. In this case, they should spend it studying different subjects.

According to Corallo and McDonald (2002), the study timetable helps learners engage with their studies in their own time and pace. Corallo and McDonald (2002) argued that it is important to have an effective timetable to help learners manage the time spent on each subject or topic. Their views resonate well with principal C's opinion that,

"*We provide learners with study timetables to assist them to use their time productively. That is, to help them prioritise subjects in terms of which ones should be given more time in view of how they perform in those different subjects. This also helps them focus on their studies in order to do well in their examinations*".

Looking at the above statement, it is clear that teachers and their SMTs do their best to help the QP learners improve their performance. However, the concern which schools have is whether the study timetable provided is fruitfully utilised or not. If not, schools in collaboration with parents, should monitor how learners use their study time. In cases where schools want to closely monitor how learners make use of their study timetables, the SMTs should focus on the QP learners who are prone to mischief, given their unkind relationship with books. Corallo and McDonald (2002) stressed that the QP learners should be provided with special programme to enable them to learn at their own time and space.

3.7. Lesson Planning

Table 8: How teachers plan for their lessons

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Sometimes	9	6.7
Often	26	19.3
Always	100	74.0
Total	135	100

Table 8 indicates that 74% of the respondents always plan before they teach, while 19.3% said that they often plan before they teach. Only 6.7% said that they sometimes plan before they teach. This shows that the majority of the respondents plan before they teach. In the contrary, the majority of the SMTs illustrated that it is difficult to plan a lesson for learners with different cognitive levels. They are of the opinion that when planning for a lesson, teachers should develop strategies suitable for both the promoted and QP learners. Respondent B remarked that,

"*It is not an easy task to plan for both the QP and promoted learners in one class because their cognitive levels are different. This means that teachers who teach a class composed of these learners have to balance between the low level and high cognitive levels as their IQs are not the same*".

Principal C added that,

"*We do not separate the promoted from the progressed learners when we plan for our lessons. We use one lesson plan to teach them together. The only difference is that we profile them and use different strategies in our teaching. Sometimes we plan extra classes for the QP learners to deal with topics that are difficult to them. The extra classes are mostly done in the afternoons*".

Principal E remarked thus, "*When it comes to lesson planning, it is difficult to include activities that are inclusive of both the progressed and promoted learners*".

This confirms how difficult it is to plan for a lesson that caters for both the QP and promoted learners. This means that teachers need training on how to vary the manner in which they organise and plan for their lesson activities. They need to plan before they teach to ensure that learners with different cognitive levels participate in their lessons. As Scrivener (2017) observed, a well-planned lesson caters for learners with different cognitive levels. The best way to meet the learners' different needs is to organise lessons differently (DBE, 2011). Stella (2012) agreed, adding that the best way to teach a mixed class of learners with different learning

needs and a range of different abilities is to design an effective lesson plan with different activities. This implies that in a class of both the QP and promoted learners, a teacher should produce a lesson plan that is all inclusive in order to promote her/his learners' participation therein.

3.8. Daily lesson preparations

Sasson (2007) believes that a teacher should prepare tasks for the whole class that may cater for learners with different learning abilities. Table 9 shows that 65.9% of the respondents always do their daily preparations before they teach. All the SMTs confirmed this, pointing out that they always prepare lessons to ensure that their day-to-day classroom activities provide the individual learners with necessary knowledge based on their different cognitive levels and performances.

Table 9: Teachers and their daily lesson preparations

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	1	0.7
Seldom	4	3.0
Sometimes	14	10.4
Often	27	20.7
Always	89	65.9
Total	135	100

With only 0.7% of the respondents indicating that they never do daily preparations, we may conclude that the majority of the teachers thoroughly prepare for their lessons before they start teaching learners of different cognitive levels. Principal E emphasised that,

"*We encourage all our teachers to go to class well prepared. We do not allow them to go to classes unprepared. Most of the teachers here have files for preparations which we monitor once a week. We do not allow teachers to do preparations on pieces of papers, but to have written documents that must be produced as evidence*".

Principal G agreed thus,

"*Teachers do written preparations because as a principal, I must check for evidence that indeed they prepare what they teach. I always encourage them to do written preparations because they must produce those as evidence in their IQMS summative evaluation for pay progression*".

For principal H, the bottom line was that,

"*As a principal, I do check lesson preparations because I have to know what is being prepared for our learners, and then provide support. I also check if the activities in the preparations are inclusive of both QP and promoted learners*".

Given the kind of expressions these respondents made, suffices it to note that teachers might prepare lessons for compliance's sake, while in practice, they do the opposite of what they prepared. In other words, putting effort in teaching and learning is not guaranteed here. It all depends on one's conscience and professionalism. Thus, if schools are to see the QP learners' performance improving to the same level with the promoted ones, teachers should be assisted on how to prepare lessons that positively impact on the former's performance. This is consistent with Thomas and Shaw's (1993) assertion that teachers need to prepare a lesson that focuses on the "whole class" with different cognitive levels.

Thomas and Shaw (1993) emphasised that appropriate activities that cater for the level of learning of each group of learners have to be prepared to ensure that they cover the same general theme with all other learners. The data also revealed that there is no lesson which is separately prepared for either the QP or promoted learners alone. Only all-embracing lesson plans are prepared by teachers here. To ensure the maximum involvement of all learners, teachers need to differentiate the manner in which their activities are planned and organised in a lesson plan. This dovetails with Taghipour's (2013) emphasis that lesson preparation provides teachers with many variations in activities, methods and materials to be used during the teaching and learning process.

3.9. Educational Media

Table 10: How teachers organise the teaching media to support learning

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	21	15.6
Seldom	14	10.4
Sometimes	41	30.4
Often	35	25.9
Always	24	17.7
Total	135	100

Educational media is viewed as the teaching materials that make learning exciting, and less monotonous (Stosic, 2015). Figures in Table 10 show that 17.7% of the respondents always prepare their teaching media for each lesson, whereas 30.4% sometimes organise such media for their teaching. This suggests that the majority of the respondents do not organise their teaching media. Most of those interviewed revealed that teaching media such as television are too expensive as they also require that the school buys data to access the educational programmes. Principal C observed that,

"*There are lesson broadcasts on television which present Mathematics and Physical Science, but our learners do not have access to those lessons as we do not have a set of television to help them access those educational channels*".

Principal J bemoaned the fact that,

"*Our Geography teacher does not have a globe in his classroom. Instead, he uses a map in the place of a globe. Learners in his Geography class do not concentrate during his lessons. There is no excitement there and learners get bored when he teaches them. That is why the learners' performance in that Geography class is poor*".

This is consistent with National Education Technology Plan (2017) line of reasoning on this matter in that media helps motivate or excite learners during lessons (National Education Department, 2017). This encourages them to participate in the teaching and learning process. Media also promote attentiveness during lesson. This illustrates that schools need to be assisted in terms of acquiring educational media to provide learners with productive learning experiences to keep them focused. Educational media is flexible because it can be used to all levels of learners in all subjects. Masterman (1999), in support of the above, contends that teaching media also encourages learners to take more responsibility for and control over their own learning, engage in joint planning of the syllabus, and take longer-term perspectives independently. The use of media in teaching and learning process is a necessity that cannot be overlooked or down played. It attracts the learners' attention and makes the teaching and learning activities more interesting and also effective.

3.10. Teacher Supervision through Lesson Observations

Table 11: Supervision of teachers in class through lesson observations

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	4	3.1
Seldom	13	9.6
Sometimes	33	24.4
Often	38	28.1
Always	47	34.8
Total	135	100

Table 11 shows that less than half (34.8%) of the respondents always have their lessons observed as they teach, while 3.1% are never observed. This is contrary to Daniel (2017) argument that the SMT members should observe teachers' lessons in order to identify their teaching strengths and weaknesses. This would help determine the effectiveness of their pedagogical approaches in lesson delivery. Danielson (2001) believes that through observing teachers teaching, the SMT members are in a position to see how they create conducive atmosphere for effective learning. This would be in addition to how they apply different teaching methods to deal with learners with different cognitive levels. The interviewees expressed their support of teachers being observed while teaching. Their argument is that this makes them assess the teachers' commitments in their core duty of teaching learners, and the school's academic progress. However, the interviewees noted the difficulties associated with regular lesson observations. Their reservations stem from their other administrative workload they claim is too much for them. For example, principal E stated that,

"*Lesson observations at our school are not done effectively because as the principal, I also have to deal with the other administrative tasks here. That is, I also teach and have to do all work associated with a class teacher as our school is small. Thus, it is difficult for me to teach and at the same time have time to regularly observe other teachers teaching*".

The above response implies that principals are willing to regularly observe their teachers' lesson deliveries, but are overwhelmed by too much workload. Other administrative duties circumvent their abilities to regularly supervise and monitor what goes on in the classroom. As such, their schools' teaching and learning issues are compromised. This is reflected in the following comment by principal F,

"*As a principal, I do not do class visits to observe my teachers delivering lessons. I sometimes move around checking with them, and listening to what they teach. I am too committed for observing them teach*".

This situation, if unchecked, could result in the learners' poor academic performance. The significance of observing the teaching and learning activities was confirmed by Benstein (2011) when he pointed out that learning occurs if teachers are in class on time teaching instead of neglecting their core duty.

3.11. Teachers' Subject Specialisation

Table 12: Subject allocation according to specialisation

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	4	3.1
Seldom	6	4.4
Sometimes	8	5.9
Often	33	24.4
Always	84	62.2
Total	135	100

The quality of education in any country is measured by commitment and competency of its teachers. The former is, therefore, as good as its teachers' competence levels (DBE, 2011). In other words, the academic performance of learners and the quality of results is determined by competency of the teachers in the context of their subject specialisation, and how they the use of appropriate teaching strategies and approaches. Teachers are expected to be competent in the subjects they teach.

The results presented in Table 12 show that 62.2% of the respondents are always allocated subjects they specialised in. This speaks to Bertram's (2011) understanding that the teachers' content knowledge is a prerequisite to the learners' good performance at school, especially those who teach the QP learners with knowledge gaps from the previous grade. According to the interviewees, teachers are allocated subjects they specialised in at university. Principal E confirmed that,

"*In terms of subject allocation to teachers, we give them those they are experts in. But, our case is different as we are a small school with few teachers. We are forced to allocate teachers subjects they did not major in at university*".

Principals F added that,

"*We allocate them according to their professional qualifications. But, we also consider one's interest in the subject because a teacher might have qualified to teach Physical Science, and also have an interest in teaching other subjects. Such a teacher is given the opportunity to teach the subject he/she is interested in teaching*".

This was echoed by principal J who said,

"*We allocate teachers according to their professional competency. For example, if a teacher specialised in Mathematics, we allocate him/her Maths. We also allocate that teacher other subjects that form the general stream. The case is the same with teachers who specialised in general subjects*".

From the above texts, the informants confirmed that they are allocated subjects according to their professional qualifications. This suggests that what is needed is for the department to train them on how to manage the teaching and assessment of the QP learners for the improved educational outcomes.

With about 3.1% of the respondents indicating that they have never been allocated subjects of their specialisation, one would argue that subject allocation in this circuit is first according to specialisation, and then one's interests thereafter. Fahrman, et al. (2020) concurred that teachers should have subject content depth so that they are able to select appropriate content to teach to different categories of learners. This means that a subject specialist teacher is able to select content suitable for both the QP and promoted learners. This might help minimise the number of learners who would otherwise be moved to the next grade through the progression

policy. It is important that a teacher specialises in the subject which he or she teaches to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning process at school.

3.12. Different Teaching Methods

Table 13: The Teachers' application of different teaching methods in class

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Sometimes	12	8.9
Often	32	23.7
Always	91	67.4
Total	135	100

Table 13 shows that 67.4% of the respondents always apply different methods when teaching different themes or concepts in their subject areas. Only 8.9% stated that they sometimes do so. The above information was also supported by the interviewees who acknowledged that they use different methods when teaching different concepts. These respondents also emphasised that teachers use different teaching strategies when teaching learners where they take into account their different backgrounds and abilities. In principal B's own words,

"We encourage our teachers to use different strategies when teaching because some of the sections might be difficult for the QP learners to understand. Most of the QP learners have content knowledge gaps, thus they are taken care of when lesson presentations are varied".

Principal D remarked that,

"There were some general complaints from some teachers at our school about the QP learners' passive participation in class. As a school, we agreed that we must seriously consider the selection of teaching approaches when we teach different concepts".

The above views are in support of Vikoo's (2003) remarks that learners have different learning styles and capabilities, and each learner masters content at his/her own pace. Marsh (2009), in collaboration with the above, contends that the monitoring of teachers provides clues on individual progress and the difficulties faced, whether the teaching pace is too fast or too slow, and which learners need individual attention. It was discovered that when preparing for lessons, teachers also take into cognisance the learners' individual differences. This suggests that the selection of an appropriate teaching method is one of the important processes that ensure successful teaching. Johnson (2017) confirmed that a teacher should use a wide range of teaching methods to cater for both the promoted and QP learners' diverse needs.

3.13. HODs and Supervision

The data in Table 14 below indicate that more than half of the respondents (51.1%) are always observed by their HODs when teaching. This ensures that they complete the syllabi every year. A mere 0.7% confirmed that they are never observed while teaching. These results point to a worrying trend that has seen teachers not being observed by the HODs while teaching for quite a long time. This is an almost equal number to those who are regularly observed.

Table 14: The supervision of teachers by HODs

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	1	0.7
Seldom	7	5.2
Sometimes	27	20.0
Often	31	23.0
Always	69	51.1
Total	135	100

The above table partially agrees with Du Plessis (2013) who claimed that monitoring can inform the SMTs about the learners' needs and the challenges that teachers experience about the learners' performances. This means that when teachers complete the syllabi every year, progressed learners would have benefitted from the teaching and learning processes that went on at school throughout the year.

In the context of the above table, the school principals agreed that when monitoring is consistently done, challenges experienced by learners (including the QP ones) can be identified and addressed timeously before they sit for their final NSC Grade 12 examinations. Principal D said that as managers, they have a curricula management plan where every week, they check the teachers' files and then give them necessary support in areas they face difficulties. They also check the learners' exercise books. Principal J added that they also provide the HODs with the monitoring tools to use when checking lesson plans, preparations, content coverage and subject improvement. Apparently, monitoring enhances learning and the syllabi completion. This means that the number of progressed learners is reduced as well.

3.14. Curriculum Management and Workshops

Table 15: Teachers and curriculum management workshops

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	1	0.7
Sometimes	32	23.7
Often	45	33.3
Always	57	42.3
Total	135	100

It is clear from Table 15 that workshops on curriculum management are regularly done as 42.3% of the respondents indicated that they always have these. About 23.7% of the respondents indicated that they sometimes hold workshops on curriculum management. This implies that only half of the respondents are regularly assisted in their subjects on areas where challenges on curriculum implementation are most experienced. The principals also admitted that the department is not doing enough in workshopping them, especially on curriculum management vis-à-vis the QP learners. They further decried their lack of capacitation and that of their teachers on how to teach the progressed learners, blaming their sorry situation on the DBE. In the absence of such workshops, schools are expected to develop their own teaching strategies in order to assist the QP learners. The principals also complained about the large numbers of the QP learners in classes. They stated that these make it difficult for teachers to give individual attention to learners. Principal F said,

"The DBE does not workshop us. Our school curriculum co-ordinator convenes meetings at the beginning of each year where we sit as members of staff and outline what we are supposed to do, and how we can manage curricula, the number of tests we are supposed to give and tasks to be written. This is done taking into account how we should handle the QP learners".

Principal G seconded the above views, pointing out that they do not have workshops organised by their department, but only hold meetings at school level wherein they discuss about how they would work with both the QP and promoted learners.

Principal I had this to say,

"We are only invited to meetings where we are told to implement the policy on progression. We are not workshopped in terms of how strategies should be developed to assist the QP learners. As a school, we sit down with teachers, especially those teaching Grade 12, and share ideas on how we should handle the QP learners".

The above principals' remarks insinuate that schools were given the progression policy without follow up workshops on how to manage the teaching and assessment of the QP learners. This implies that schools will continue to have challenges in managing the teaching of the QP learners unless they are workshopped on how to do so. It is important that the DBE conduct regular workshops for teachers on curriculum management. This would ensure that they are able to select the relevant curriculum content and strategies that would help them respond to their learners' needs.

3.15. Lesson Observations by HODs

Learning occurs when teachers are in class teaching effectively (Benstein, 2011). Opfer (2016) believes that to inculcate good teaching strategies, teachers in the same school should engage in peer observation as they deliver their lessons.

Table 16: The rate at which HODs observe lessons by teachers

Scale	Frequency	Percent
Never	17	12.6
\Seldom	16	11.9
Sometimes	41	30.4
Often	42	31.1
Always	19	14.0
Total	135	100

Table 16 shows that only 14% of the respondents are always observed while teaching. Some principals confirmed that their HODs observe teachers teaching.

Principal E observed that,

"The observation of teachers teaching stops with the HODs. These compile reports on how the QP learners are supported in class. The HODs then make follow up visits to find out how the QP learners cope with supportive strategies, and also to check on their progress, and whether the support given is effective or not".

Principal F added that teachers are observed when they are in class teaching. He, however, showed his displeasure in the manner in which the HODs observe teachers while teaching. He remarked thus,

"The HODs do monitor, but we need to improve on that because it is currently not effective. It is a cause for concern because the HODs do not have a clear programme with specific dates for their class visits. We always find teachers unprepared, without proper lesson plans and class records".

Thus, 31.1% of the respondents indicated that they are often observed. It is worthwhile to note that some of principals monitor teaching by merely moving around and listening to teachers from the outside. This was revealed by Principal C who said that,

"We do monitor teaching and also make use of the monitoring instruments when we observe a teacher teaching. Sometimes we just move around to check whether teaching is taking place, not necessarily getting inside the classroom to sit and listen".

The observation of teachers teaching by principals moving around and eavesdropping is unprofessional and more of a witch-hunt than anything else. The SMT should have a well-developed class-observation programme with specific dates.

Approximately 12.6% of the respondents claimed that they are never observed by the HODs while in class teaching. This is inconsistent with Opfer's (2006) assertion that teachers should engage in peer observations as they teach at school. Opfer (2006) contends that peer observation while teaching aims at improving the teachers' teaching strategies. This implies that if teachers are not assisted with their teaching approaches, they may not improve their teaching. This does not ensure that progressed learners receive adequate support. There is no consistence in the observation of teachers in that 30.4% of the respondents said that they are sometimes observed while teaching, and 11.9% confirmed that they are seldom observed.

The principals, on the other hand, revealed that schools observe teachers differently. The purpose behind observing teachers delivering lessons is to provide them with opportunities to get feedback from an objective and experienced supervisor (Daiel, 2017). Moreover, schools where SMT members observe teachers teaching expose them to opportunities where they receive meaningful and direct feedback about their teaching. Such feedback, according to Daniel (2017), also helps them address areas of concern in their teaching.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigated the management of teaching and assessment in mixed class of learners for quality learning and teaching using 10 selected schools Vhumbedzi Circuit, Limpopo, South Africa. Mixed methods approach was adopted for data collection The finding of the study showed that there are no clearly developed strategies in assisting in the management of teaching and assessing of QP learners. This implies that whilst learners are progressed regardless of their knowledge, there are no laid down strategies to assist them. Sequel to the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made

- SMTs should be assisted by the DBE, to develop strategies to help them in managing the teaching and assessment of the QP learners. This is in order to ensure quality teaching and learning. It can be done through the curriculum section of the DBE.
- Teachers should be periodically trained specifically on how to manage mixed class of learners on teaching and assessment activities. This would aid quality in teaching and learning exercises.
- The government and other education stakeholders should support in making available the required enabling facilities.

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