



Learners' views on challenges encountered during practical work in Consumer Studies: A case of one school in KwaZulu-Natal

Jabulisile C. Ngwenya*

School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X03, Ashwood, Pinetown, 3605
KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8256-8174>
Email: ngwenyaj@ukzn.ac.za

Nomfundo L. Shange

School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X03, Ashwood, Pinetown, 3605
KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Corresponding author*

Abstract

South Africa faces persisting youth unemployment which is partly attributed to shortage of the relevant marketable skills and work experience youth need to secure employment opportunities and to develop their own businesses. Entrepreneurial knowledge and skills should be encouraged and incorporated in education from early foundational years through secondary education to engender entrepreneurial experience and to provide young people with the means to be self-employed. Consumer Studies as a practical school subject supports the development of foundational entrepreneurship knowledge and skills by engaging learners in activities pertinent in exposing them to entrepreneurship in schools. While early exposure to entrepreneurial activities is believed to be essential, teaching and learning during practical work in Consumer Studies is afflicted by challenges and problems. This paper explores the learners' views on the challenges encountered during practical work in Consumer Studies in one secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal. A qualitative case study research design using semi-structured focus group interviews, observations and reflective journals was adopted to explore Grade 11 learners' views on the challenges in learning during practical work in Consumer Studies. Findings revealed that although the practical component is regarded as the crucial part in learning Consumer Studies, the challenges learners encountered during practical work hindered their effective learning. Insufficient infrastructure was additionally found to be the major constraint facing the teaching and learning of the subject. Lack of funds to support the teaching and learning of the subject was reported to be the dominant hindrance.

Keywords: Consumer Studies, practical work, entrepreneurship knowledge and skills, lack of funds, infrastructure

Introduction

South Africa suffers from persistent youth unemployment which is partly attributed to a shortage of necessary skills in society. Young people are not acquiring the relevant marketable skills and work experience they need to secure employment opportunities and to develop their own businesses. While employers are looking for graduates equipped with skills that will enable them to act in enterprising ways in the business environment, the skills that youth possess are not compatible with the needs and demands of employers. A number of studies advocate that vital basic entrepreneurship knowledge and skills can be acquired through entrepreneurship education which should be encouraged and entrenched from early foundational years through secondary education (Nicolaidis, 2011; Tengeh, Iwu & Nchu, 2015; Mbanefo & Eboka, 2017). Previous research has shown that Consumer Studies as a



subject can contribute to the development of fundamental entrepreneurial skills and knowledge by engaging learners in entrepreneurial activities in schools (Nicolaides, 2011; Koekemoer & Booyse, 2013; Du Toit, 2014; Umalusi, 2014; Du Toit, 2016). Consumer Studies was phased in in the National Curriculum Statement to replace Home Economics as a subject in the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase in South African secondary schools in 2006. This change was intended to better align the Consumer Studies curriculum with international curricula and the changing needs of individuals in contemporary times. The focus of the subject shifted from the needs and wants of the family to the needs and wants of the consumer in the 21st century (DBE, 2011). The consumer and entrepreneurship are regarded as the predominant principles in the Consumer Studies curriculum. These principles are viewed as vital in the inclusion of the curriculum since South Africa is faced with challenges of insufficient resources and an increased level of unemployment.

Consumer Studies as a skill-oriented subject can inculcate entrepreneurial attitudes and experience in learners that can equip them with the basic entrepreneurial skills and knowledge that will help them to be self-employed (Nicolaides, 2011; Tengeh, Iwu & Nchu, 2015). Although Consumer Studies is aimed at supporting entrepreneurship development, the teaching and learning of the subject is plagued with challenges. The efficiency of Consumer Studies in developing an entrepreneurial mindset among youth will be compromised if the problems that affect the study of the subject in schools are not disclosed and addressed.

Since the implementation of the NCS in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in 2006 and the revised curriculum (CAPS) in 2013 in South Africa, very few studies have been undertaken in Consumer Studies. There is a shortage of studies in relation to learners' voices on practical work in Consumer Studies. This paper thus contributes to knowledge by addressing the gap in the existing literature in Consumer Studies, particularly on challenges in learning during practical work. The question that guides the research is: What are the learners' views on the challenges encountered during practical work in Consumer Studies in one secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal? This paper presents a literature review, thereafter describing the methodology used, the results and analysis of the findings. It concludes with recommendations and implications for future research in Consumer Studies.

Literature review

The literature review commences with a description of Consumer Studies as a school subject and practical work in the subject, and then focuses on challenges encountered in practical work.

Consumer Studies as a school subject

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2011) notes that Consumer Studies focuses on the development of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in learners to become responsible and informed consumers of food, clothing, housing, furnishings and household equipment. Du Toit and Booyse (2015) identify various learning outcomes of Consumer Studies among learners, including management of consumer's role, adequate knowledge of consumer choice, responsible use of resources, and production and marketing. Since "the consumer" and "entrepreneurship" are intertwined in all the topics in the subject, the competencies underpinning Consumer Studies are that learners need to have practical ability as well as entrepreneurial knowledge and skills needed to become informed and responsible consumers of goods and services. The importance of the subject includes entrepreneurship and the production and marketing of quality products (DoE, 2003; DBE, 2011). The subject keeps learners abreast of current consumer issues, which include food and nutrition and modification of products in order to suit consumer needs (Thoresen et al., 2010; Pendergast & Dewhurst, 2012; Ifeanyi-Uche & Chima (2013).



Practical work in Consumer Studies

According to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), it is necessary for learners to undergo practical classes in the subject to demonstrate their practical skills in the handling of food products, clothing and soft furnishings (DBE, 2011). The main aim of the subject is to produce learners that are adequately equipped with the comprehensive theoretical knowledge and practical skills required for engaging in producing saleable products to generate income. Five different practical options offered in Consumer Studies provide learners with knowledge of small scale production, entrepreneurship and marketing of quality products (DBE, 2011). Entrepreneurial skills are developed through the emphasis of small scale production and marketing in the chosen practical option. Practical work emphasizes exposure of learners with real life situations by creating the opportunities for learners to put into practice the skills and content learned in theory lessons. Practical knowledge gained by learners will serve as a strong background for better career development in the subject.

Challenges affecting teaching and learning during practical work

Research shows that practical work is plagued with a number of challenges which impede the effective learning and teaching (Abrahams, 2009; Okoro, 2013; De and Dutta, 2015; Gamawa, 2015; Olayinka, 2016). Sharpe (2012), Okoro (2013) and De and Dutta (2015) conducted studies on challenges in practical work in Home Economics. Okoro (2013) found that inadequate learning resources was a serious challenge facing the teaching and learning of practical work in Home Economics. In De and Dutta's (2015) study, most learners stated that practical subjects' teachers, especially women, are too harsh and intolerant when they are stressed. As a result learners were averse to choosing practical subjects. In Olayinka's (2016) study findings revealed that students were concerned about the shortage of Home Economics teachers.

Furthermore, In De and Dutta's (2015), Gamawa's (2015) and Olayinka's (2016) studies, a shortage of adequate equipment for practical lessons was also revealed as a major challenge facing the teaching and learning of practical work in Home Economics. Lack of well-equipped Home Economics laboratories and inability of teachers to improvise instructional materials hindered the teaching and learning of the subject. These obstacles were also found in Arubayi and Obunadike's (2011) study in the teaching and learning of Clothing and Textiles in Senior Secondary schools. Lowe, Newcombe and Stumpers (2013) in their study found that inadequate instructional materials, lack of improvisation on the side of teachers and utilisation of teaching aids, as well as inadequate laboratory constituted problems to the teaching and learning in Clothing and Textile. Gamawa (2015) also found that inadequate funding, especially by government was a challenge facing the practical classes in Home Economics. He further revealed that learners who chose Home Economics were expected to provide necessary equipment on their own with limited support from government. This gave rise to lack of interest in the subject and many parents were also discouraging their children from doing the subject because it is capital intensive.

In a study conducted in vocational subjects, Chakamba, Jumo, Edziwa and Misozi (2013) revealed that most of the equipment outlined in the syllabus was not available. Other broken, damaged or dilapidated equipment were neither replaced nor renovated. This was found to be defeating the aspect of vocationalisation as the subject matter could be taught in abstract. Since the phasing in of Consumer Studies to replace Home Economics as a subject in the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase in the South African secondary schools in 2006, very few studies have been undertaken on challenges encountered in practical work in Consumer Studies. This paper, therefore, addresses the gap in the existing literature in Consumer Studies.



Research Methodology

The study adopted an interpretivistic qualitative case study research to understand the learners' views on the challenges encountered during practical work in Consumer Studies. The interpretivism maintains that there are multiple, socially-constructed realities in which the researcher's judgements are considered in the interpretation of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Purposive sampling method was used to select Grade 11 Consumer Studies learners in one secondary school (Siyathokoza, a pseudonym was used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity) located in King Cetshwayo District in KwaZulu- Natal. This sampling method was relevant for the study since we wanted learners who had experienced practical work in previous grades in Consumer Studies. While there were three secondary schools in the ward, we chose to conduct research in one school which offered Consumer Studies as a subject.

Focus group interviews which lasted 35 to 40 minutes and reflective journals were used to elicit learners' views on the challenges encountered during practical work in Consumer Studies. According to Creswell (2014), a focus group interview is a process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people. There were two Consumer Studies Grade 11 classes with 38 learners in Class A and 40 learners in Class B. Each class was divided into five groups of eight learners, which totalled to ten groups when both classes were combined. Groups were labelled with group numbers from one to ten to avoid disclosing the learners' names and maintain confidentiality. The interviews took place during break to avoid disturbances during the teaching time. Grade 11 learners and their parents gave consent to be interviewed and tape-recorded in order for the researchers to obtain learners' views, and allow flexibility in probing (Creswell, 2014). The reflective journals were considered important for this study because it helped learners to think freely and write their experiences in their own words without face-to-face interaction with the researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Learners were required to reflect after each practical lesson for two weeks. They were given the journals after each practical task by their teacher, and these were handed back to the teacher once they had completed reflecting on the specific task for the day. The Consumer Studies teacher kept the journals safely. Observations were used as supporting evidence. Six practical lessons were observed using observation schedule.

The data set obtained from focus group interviews and reflective journals was analyzed using thematic analyses (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). We began the process by familiarizing ourselves with the data through transcribing audio-data to textual-data, and reading the transcripts several times. A process of open coding was used, and categories were established, reviewed and clustered into specific themes to report the findings. Observations were used to triangulate data; this allowed us to verify whether what learners were saying took place in practical lessons. Themes that emerged from the focus group interviews were used to analyse reflective journals and observations.

Ethical considerations such as securing permission to conduct the research from the university at which the authors are based and from the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal, the protection of participants' identities and obtaining informed consent from learners and parents, were respected. Learners were also informed that participation in the study was not compulsory.

Findings

The questions asked were relevant to the challenges that Grade 11 learners encounter during practical work in Consumer Studies. The responses from interviews with learners provide some fundamental insights into the challenges that hinder learning during practical work in regards to Consumer Studies in one selected school. Discussion of the findings in this paper was drawn on different challenges learners encountered in Consumer Studies. These challenges will be presented in three themes namely: challenges related to school, challenges



related to learners and lastly unforeseen challenges. Verbatim quotes are provided in the discussion of each theme to ensure that in the presentation of findings the views of learners (from groups 1 to 10) are not lost, as they provide supporting evidence.

Although Consumer Studies consists of five types of practical components to choose from for a small scale production; the school in this study chose food production. The choice of this component was based on the resources the school had. While food production was the chosen practical component for the school, there were hindrances that affected learning during practical work.

Challenges related to school

Learners mentioned numerous challenges related to the school which resulted in some of the objectives not to be met during practical work for Consumer Studies. Those challenges were related to the infrastructure of the school, shortage of resources and lack of funds.

Insufficient infrastructure of the school

Although a proper good work flow in the kitchen is a necessity to do practical activities with ease, learners were concerned about the limited floor space. In addition to learners' responses, during observation it was discovered that the kitchen was not spacious enough to allow for free movement without bumping into people or work surfaces. The class was bigger than the size of the kitchen. There were more learners no adequate space for storage, preparing, cooking and dishwashing. This is what learners said.

"There was less floor space, we were overcrowded during practical lessons and we could not move easily." (Group 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6)

According to the CAPS for Consumer Studies the choice of the practical option must be informed by the infrastructure and available finances of the school (DBE, 2011). The necessary infrastructure for food and production practical option is a fitted and equipped kitchen with electricity supply. Although it is imperative for sufficient infrastructure to be made available for effective teaching and learning of practical work, in this study learners mentioned that they had less floor space in the kitchen. While a proper good work flow in the kitchen is needed to do practical activities, the kitchen was not spacious enough to allow for free movement. It was difficult for learners to move around as the kitchen was not spacious enough. The problem of space was exacerbated by the fact that the number of learners was more than the desired ratio needed to be accommodated in the practical class and this confirms the views of Uwameiye (2015) in their study. The requirement as indicated in the CAPS is that the number of learners in a class for food production may not exceed thirty two (DBE, 2011). Although there were two Grade 11 Consumer Studies classes, the numbers in practical class were more than the required number. The kitchen was not spacious enough to accommodate the whole class. Research confirms that insufficient infrastructure is the major constraints facing the teaching and learning of the subject (Uwameiye, 2015; Oyedeji, 2016). While more learners chose the subject, the kitchen size could not accommodate the number of learners during practical work.

The participants further reported that another factor that contributed to overcrowding in the kitchen was the shortage of Consumer Studies teachers. The teacher-to-learner ratio was not adhered to as per requirement by the Department of Education since there was a large number of learners who were doing the subject from Grade 10 to 12 and only one teacher taught it.



One of the necessary prerequisite for the subject is the hot and cold water supply with taps. However, in this study another hindrance that was raised by the learners was the lack of running water in the kitchen. This is what learners said:

“There are no taps in the kitchen. It is challenging to fetch water outside, we walked a long distance with buckets to fetch water from the tanks and then we did not finish on time.” (Group 1, 4, 5, 6 and 9)

“We did not have enough containers to fetch water from the tanks, we waited for other groups to come back and then we fetch ours.” (Group 2, 3, 4 and 10)

From the learners' responses it was clear that running water inside the kitchen was an impediment to the effective teaching and learning during practical work. While the CAPS for Consumer Studies indicates that hot and cold water supply with taps at the sinks is one of the minimum infrastructure for Food Production option (DBE, 2011), the school did not have running water in the kitchen. Learners had to walk a long distance to fetch water with buckets from tanks as the tanks were far away from the kitchen. Although there were sinks in the kitchen, there was no running water within the taps. As a result learners could not complete their practical activities on time due to time spent fetching water. Shortage of containers was also viewed by learners as a limitation. This resulted in learners failing to complete their tasks on time as they had to take turns to go and fetch water.

Shortage of resources

Findings revealed that there was a challenge pertaining shortage of equipment in the kitchen which had a negative impact on learners' time management. Learners mentioned a number of challenges that needed thorough intervention as it required to be budgeted for by finance of the school and the Department of Basic Education.

Learners used large bowls for washing and rinsing dirty equipment. This was also evident during observation since learners were washing their equipment and no proper rinsing followed afterwards but it was simply a wash and wipe only as there were no enough washing basins. There were only five washing basins for seven groups of six learners per group. Group 2 mentioned that not having enough sinks with washing basins compelled them to improvise:

“We used large bowls for washing dishes because there were few sinks and dishes were not rinsed thoroughly.”

What we noticed during observation is that there were seven stoves in the kitchen but learners were using six stoves as the other one was broken. As a result, the teacher was forced to reduce the number of groups to six. This somehow affected proper learning as each group was made up of a large group of learners. This resulted in learners not completing their practical tasks on time.

Another concern raised by learners was inadequate number of electrical beaters. Groups had to share those beaters and this impacted on time. This was said:

“We did not have enough electrical beaters, time was wasted since we had to wait for others to finish which leads us not to finish on time.”(Group 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7)

The learners' responses revealed that there was a shortage of electric beaters in the kitchen as a result time was lost while learners were waiting for electric beaters as they took turns to use them. Other electrical beaters were broken.

Group 4 and 6 voiced out that they did not have other resources to support their learning.



“There were no suitable teaching resources like DVD, TV, magazines at school. We only watch cooking programmes at home. At school, we are relying on what is in the books.”

Learners mentioned that they did not have adequate instructional aids such as DVD's, television and magazines to assist them with learning in Consumer Studies at school.

According to Uwameiye (2015), sufficient equipment is the essential requirement for each practical component in the school. Arong and Ogbadu (2010), support this fact by saying that adequate equipment is vital to effective teaching and learning during practical work in Consumer Studies. This indicates that any schools offering the subject but lacks essential equipment cannot reasonably expect to achieve its main objective in learners' performance. They go further to say that for effective practical classes in Consumer Studies there is need for adequate supply of equipment, instructional materials and professional teachers. Umalusi (2014) asserts that in order to produce a quality, marketable product, the schools need to be adequately equipped. However the findings of the study revealed that there were challenges pertaining shortage of equipment in the kitchen and this hindered effective learning.

Lack of funds

Learners mentioned that there were insufficient funds to support them with their learning of Consumer Studies. Broken equipment were not repaired as there were no funds set aside for maintenance specifically for Consumer Studies.

“One of the stoves is broken and two egg beaters are broken. They were broken last year. No one has come to fix them. Our teacher said there is no money to pay the technician or to buy new egg beaters.” (Group 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9)

There was no enough money to buy some ingredients. As a result learners could not do all the practical activities. Lack of funds resulted in learners having to do less practical activities as required within the term. They stated:

“There was not enough practical work: we did not do a lot of practical work within each term because there was no money to buy other ingredients.” (Group 1, 3, 5 and 6)

As learners were expected to buy ingredients themselves, parents had to support their children by buying missing ingredients. Learners were required to do practical classes in groups to support those whose parents could not afford to buy ingredients. This was said:

“We normally ask our parents to give us money to buy other ingredients for important recipes. But some parents do not have money to support practical lessons. We do not want to see other learners getting a zero because we do practicals in groups, we support each other.” (Group 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10)

“We had to raise funds on our own through fundraising so we get money for buying ingredients. Sometimes our teacher used to buy other ingredients because it was difficult to do other tasks if we do not have all the ingredients.” (All Groups)

According to the CAPS for Consumer Studies (DBE, 2011), the pre-requisite for Consumer Studies is the financial means to support the practical section. In addition, the school has to set aside a budget for maintenance of equipment such as stoves, and replacement of broken items. However what is evident in this study learners complained that there was inadequate number of electrical beaters in the kitchen. Learners had to raise funds through selling other products in school so that they could buy the necessary ingredients for their tasks. The Consumer Studies teacher had to devise strategies to ensure that important practical tasks



are done. In addition, findings showed that broken equipment were not repaired due to lack of funds. As a result they could not finish on time due to the fact that learners had to take turns to use the equipment. This had a negative impact on learners' time management and learners were then compelled to do their practical in large groups. This hindered learning as the learners were deprived of being taught the whole curriculum.

In line with these findings, previous studies have demonstrated that poor funding by government causes widespread cases of shortage of infrastructure, dilapidated equipment and this in turn hinders effective teaching and learning of practical work (Chakamba et al., 2013; Gamawa, 2015). This finding also resonates with the existing literature which states that inadequate funds from government and parents are major predicament in effective teaching and learning of practical work in African countries (Puyate, 2008; Arubayi & Obunadike, 2011; Olayiwola, 2014).

Challenges related to learners

Participants raised a number of challenges they encountered during practical work for Consumer Studies which were related to them. Some of these challenges may have been caused by being reckless and would have been avoided. Their responses varied as follows during interviews:

"Some ingredients were stored in the containers and they looked similar so one assumed it was icing sugar whereas it was flour, but we were rushing and did not read the container properly."(Group 3, 5, 7 and 10)

Learners further mentioned that they lost track of time as their products were not finished timeously. Other learners stated that because they were rushing and wanted to finish on time they ended up collecting wrong ingredients. Others failed to differentiate the ingredients as it looked similar.

Learners failed to produce what was required as the physical appearance of the end product was not as it should be because they failed to interpret the recipe. It was evident that some learners were not able to differentiate and analyse the recipe since they were not familiar with some of the ingredients as it was their first time doing Consumer Studies. This is what they said:

"It was difficult to analyse the recipe as we were unfamiliar with most of the ingredients, appearance of the product was not the same as the one that was desired due to misinterpreting the recipe."
(Group 4)

Misinterpreting the recipe by learners resulted in the negative outcomes of their final products. Interpreting the recipe for Chelsea buns was viewed as learners' main challenge. Kneading technique posed a challenge to most learners as they were not able to identify if the dough was ready.

"Kneading technique was a problem since we were not able to see when the dough was right, we did not follow the recipe properly." (Group 1 and 6)
"It was difficult to knead the dough as it needed more force and strength, so the dough was not perfect and our Chelsea bun did not rise." (Group 9)

In addition learners could not follow the recipe thoroughly. While the other group of learners stated kneading was difficult as it needed more energy and strength so their Chelsea buns ended up not coming right to what was expected and desired from them.



Unforeseen challenges

There were some unexpected challenges encountered by the participants during practical work. Learners were concerned about challenges that were unpredicted or beyond their control such as power failure, scarcity of water and support from parents.

Learners mentioned that they did not do any practical activity if there was power failure. All Groups mentioned that: *“When electricity was gone, no practical work would take place as there was no other plan to support us.”*

Learners pointed out that if there was no electricity they were unable to do any practical work even though it was scheduled for that specific day. This meant they only relied on the main source of electricity and the school did not have any contingency plans for days when there was power failure.

The only source of water supply was tanks. Learners indicated that shortage of water was a problem because they could not continue with practical classes as water served as the basic element in the kitchen especially if there was no rain: All groups identified that:

“If there was shortage of water from the tanks when there was no rain for days it was a problem as we could not do the practical tasks. We had to bring water from home which was not enough to carry out our practical tasks and then our practical class was cancelled.”

It became difficult to engage in practical work on some of those days when there was drought as learners relied heavily on water tanks which is water supplied by the rain. As a result practical classes were cancelled on days.

Another challenge faced by learners was that they did not get support at home from parents as they did not regard Consumer Studies as an important subject like other subjects. Parents could not see the value of the subject in the school curriculum. These were the responses:

“Our parents are negative about the subject as they did not see the importance of Consumer Studies as a subject.” (Group 5)

“If the parent did not want you to do Consumer Studies as the subject, but it was your own choice. The parent will tell you that they do not have money because the subject you are doing is not important.” (Group 8)

Findings revealed that some learners did not get the needed support as their parents did not have in-depth understanding of what Consumer Studies entailed and the value of the subject in the lives of the learners in future. Apart from lack of funds on the side of the parents, parents were ill-informed of Consumer Studies as a vocational subject that can support the development of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills which learners need to be self-employed.

The participants admitted that the teachers normally asked their parents to pay fees for practical work without prior explanation of the financial needs of the subject. This finding is also supported by Chakamba et al. (2013) and Oyedeji (2016) who found that many parents find it very difficult to support the practical aspect of their childrens' education. This was attributed to the lack of knowledge about the value of the subject to the education of their children. While the school was relying on rain water from the tanks, no alternative plan the school had in place during shortage of rain. In addition, there were no alternatives in place for contingencies in case of power outage.



Conclusion

This article sought to explore the challenges encountered during practical work in Consumer Studies from the view point of learners. Based on a case study of one secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal, the findings revealed that there were numerous challenges that learners encountered during practical work which resulted in some of the objectives not to be met in Consumer Studies.

Although practical component is regarded as the crucial part in learning Consumer Studies, findings revealed that the challenges learners encountered during practical work hindered effective learning. The infrastructure facilities are considered by the Department of Basic Education as the prerequisite for the practical component. However, the findings revealed that insufficient infrastructure was the major constraints facing the teaching and learning of the subject. While the kitchen is regarded as the main infrastructure for the chosen practical option, it was not capacious enough to accommodate all the learners during practical work. This emanates from the large class size. It was not easy to split the class further due to the shortage of Consumer Studies teachers. Despite the fact that running water in the sinks is mentioned by the DBE as the prerequisite for Food and Nutrition practical component, findings revealed that learners had to walk a distance to fetch water from the tanks outside the kitchen. Because of shortage of funds, it took time to repair broken equipment. This resulted in insufficient equipment like sinks and stoves. In addition, there were no contingency plans in place in case of shortages of rain and power failure.

The main objective of teaching and learning of practical work in Consumer Studies is to provide great opportunity for learners to be exposed to the practical activities which would equip them with skills needed to start their own small entrepreneurial enterprises and thrive as entrepreneurs thereby creating job opportunities in the future. However, if learners are not able to produce marketable products due to shortage of equipment, the learning cannot be effective (Umalusi, 2014). If learners experience problems that hinder learning during practical work and these challenges are not attended to, learners will not be adequately engaged in practical activities which help them to acquire valuable entrepreneurial knowledge and skills needed for self-employment. While the South African government introduced the concept of no-fee schools in order to accommodate parents who are financially needy, the funds are needed in schools that offer Consumer Studies to purchase learning and teaching support materials. The findings of this article affirm the conclusions of previous scholars that the government is failing to support public schools that offer practical subjects (Badugela, 2012; Phillips, 2014; Umunadi, 2016).

Based on the findings it is imperative that the Department of Basic Education supports the schools with necessary funds, equipment and resources such as DVDs and relevant recipe books to enhance teaching and learning of Consumer Studies. In addition, it can be said that effective practical work in Consumer Studies should not be viewed as the responsibility of the government alone. There is a need for parents to support the effective teaching of the subject. The school should conduct awareness towards enlightening parents about the value of the subject. The fact that funds are the fundamental prerequisite for the practical lessons in Consumer Studies cannot be denied; therefore, schools should devise and implement strategies to provide adequate funding for Consumer Studies practical lessons, since the practical lessons cannot be done without having the ingredients necessary for carrying out the practical activities. It should be the responsibility of the school and the Consumer Studies teachers to ask for donations for equipment like generators to assist with teaching and learning when there is power failure. The school should also liaise with the municipality for provision of water should there be water shortages in the tanks.

Further research with a much longer period of observation during practicals is desirable. The study can also be replicated in other related science subjects. Likewise further study can be



conducted on the relationship between learners' views and teachers' views on the challenges encountered during practical work in Consumer Studies. The study was done in only one district, King Cetshwayo, and focused on only one rural school. Further research is needed in other KwaZulu-Natal districts to increase the scope of the study to include many other schools, including comparisons of different school contexts.

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