

Educator training challenges in implementing the National Curriculum Statement Policy

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum change aimed at improving the education system in order to promote quality education is generally regarded as a positive move in a country that has undergone a political transition. This is the case because education is a prerequisite for sustainable development in any country, and South Africa is no exception. The new South African curriculum set out in the National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy was designed to redress the educational imbalances that were prominent in South Africa's past by providing quality education. However, the success of any new curriculum depends on the provision of training to public school educators by capable and knowledgeable trainers regarding the correct implementation of the new curriculum policy. This article highlights some of the challenges faced in training educators. The Vhembe District in the Limpopo Department of Education was selected as a case study for this article.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1994, there have been significant political changes and constitutional development in South Africa, and these changes have had an effect on the education system. The adoption of the new *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* (RSA 1996) with its Bill of Rights guarantees everyone the fundamental right to education. The Preamble to the Constitution states the need to heal the division of the past and promote and adopt democratic principles in order to improve the quality of life for and unity of all South African citizens.



The adoption of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* laid the foundation for curriculum transformation and development in South Africa. As a result, the new curriculum, the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* (RSA, 2002a, 2002b) was eventually developed for implementation in schools, with its new teaching methodology, *Outcomes-based Education (OBE)*, which focuses on the achievement of specific learning outcomes. The implementation itself as a process should not be underestimated, because it is a complex process. The objective of providing training to educators in this regard is to capacitate them in respect of the correct interpretation and implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*. The Limpopo Department of Education in general and the Vhembe District in particular provide a case in point.

Since educators are at the coalface of curriculum implementation in schools, the success and correct implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* depends on the quality of training that educators receive to improve their skills and knowledge amidst all the challenges. This article outlines some of the challenges that educators have encountered in implementing the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*. These challenges are discussed both from perspectives of the Department of Basic Education through its education departments, such as the Limpopo Department of Education, and from the educators' perspectives.

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION'S PERSPECTIVE

The introduction of the new education curriculum, the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* places a heavy burden on the educators who are to become the ultimate drivers of this educational transformation in schools. In order to achieve this goal, it was clear that educators needed to undergo training on the correct implementation of the new curriculum policy. It was, therefore, the responsibility of the provincial departments of education, such as the Limpopo Department of Education (LDE), to provide quality training to educators regarding the correct and successful implementation of the new curriculum policy. However, the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* in public schools by educators encountered some problems. Nevertheless, despite the challenges encountered by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the LDE, perseveres in its attempts to retain competent and talented employees so that quality products and services can be provided. Kraiger (2002:15) argues that it is vital to attract, retain, train and develop those employees who possess critical competences in an organisation (in this case, the education system) so that set objectives can be realised.

Attracting and retaining competent and talented educators in public schools are the DBE's main challenge. The *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* (RSA 2002a, 2002b) aims to develop the full potential of learners to participate actively in the sustainable development of their country as citizens of a democratic South Africa. These learners would be expected to be confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with respect for the social environment and the ability to participate in their country as critical and active citizens.

The Limpopo Department of Education provides an education service in a region of mostly rural communities. As a result of the local demographics, most of the public schools in the Vhembe District, one of the Limpopo Province's five districts, are located in rural areas. Any failure by the LDE to provide adequate training to the public school educators

in the Vhembe District may have an adverse effect on the effective implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*.

A number of challenges were identified in the Vhembe District during the provision of educator training for the correct implementation of the new curriculum policy, namely a shortage of competent educators; poor learner performance; a lack of job involvement and organisational commitment; resistance to change; the inadequate knowledge level of trainers; and the multiple roles that curriculum advisors have to play. These challenges are discussed in detail below.

Shortage of competent educators in public schools

South Africa is currently faced with a serious shortage of Science and Mathematics educators (MacGregor 2008). The Vhembe District of the LDE is just one of the districts that have a high shortage of Physical Science, Mathematics and Commerce educators. Two factors that have contributed to the shortage of educators in South Africa today are discussed.

The first factor is the rationalisation of teacher colleges in South Africa. This is a government decision that has seriously affected the training and ultimate delivery of educators in the country. Universities are now the only institutions producing educators, but the output does not meet the demand for educators of the DBE. Despite a good government initiative in the form of the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme, the response to the dire need for educators has still not been met. The Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme is a multi-year programme. This initiative of the DBE encourages teaching in public schools. Study bursaries are made available to assist qualified students to register on a full-time basis for a degree in teaching with specialisation in an area of national priority. The bursary applicants are required, after completion of their qualification, to teach at a school within the province providing the bursary for a number of years, equivalent to the number of years for which the person received the bursary (Department of Basic Education 2011).

The second factor is the number of teachers leaving the educational system. They do so for various reasons, such as retirement, or leaving the profession in pursuit of other professions outside teaching due to low salaries in the education sector.

The objective of training and development is to capacitate educators in the correct implementation of the new curriculum policy, to achieve quality education. According to Brynard and De Coning (in *Policy Implementation* in Cloete, Wissink & De Coning 2006:199), capacity includes the intangible attributes of leadership, motivation, commitment, willingness, courage, and endurance that are needed to transform theory into practice.

The shortage of Physical Science and Mathematics educators in the Vhembe District has led to the recruitment of foreign educators from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe. However, the shortage of educators has remained a challenge in the LDE. As a result, not all schools have succeeded in attracting qualified foreign educators. In an interview with Lidzhade (2010), the principal of William Themeli Secondary School in the Vhembe District, it was found that the school has been struggling to obtain a Physical Science educator since March 2010. The foreign educators that have been recruited are teaching without any induction into the new curriculum, (the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*) and its teaching methodology, OBE. As a result these teachers do not understand the philosophy and rationale behind the new curriculum, and focus only on the subject content that they teach.



Poor learner performance

The inadequate training and development that educators have received regarding the correct implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* has meant minimal success in increasing learners' performance (Limpopo Department of Education 2011). As a result, targeted training and development should be provided to educators to address the issues that are contributing towards poor performance by learners using the new curriculum.

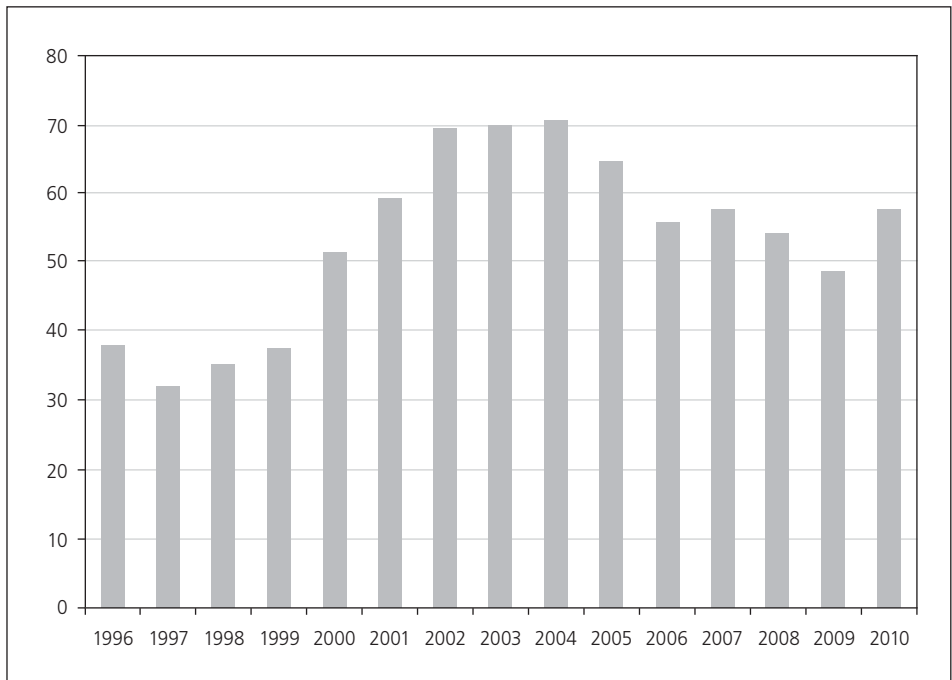
The Limpopo Province's pass rate in Grade 12 has been on the decline since the introduction of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* (RSA 2011). This poor performance was made evident by the Grade 12 provincial results outlined in the *Turn-Around Strategy to Improve Education in Limpopo* (RSA 2011). Sarah Gravett, the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg (*Mail & Guardian*, January 14 to 20, 2011:39) argues that, although the Grade 12 results are not the only way to assess the quality of the education system in the country, it is the only way that the general public measures performance in education. The first Grade 12 examinations using the new curriculum were written in 2008. From then to 2010, the Grade 12 results have shown a decline. Table 1 and

Table 1 Learner performance in Grade 12 Provincial pass rate 1996 to 2010

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
%	38,0	31,8	35,2	37,5	51,4	59,5	69,5	70,2	70,6	64,9	55,7	58,0	54,3	48,9	57,9

Source (Department of Education. Limpopo Province, 2011)

Figure 1 Provincial pass rate 1996 to 2010



Source (Department of Education. Limpopo Province, 2011)

Figure 1 show the Grade 12 learner performance in the LDE (Grade 12 results) before and after the introduction of the new curriculum, from 1996 to 2010.

The sudden sharp increase in performance in 2010 to 57,9% for the Grade 12 results could be attributed to the Winter Enrichment Classes (WEC), the distribution of study guides, exemplar question papers in all subjects and special SABC school radio programmes in which subject specialists were invited to present lessons for the Grade 12 learners. This arrangement by the Limpopo Department of Education helped educators who had some difficulties with the new content in their subject. It could therefore be argued that these arrangements were used as a stop-gap solution because the training and development provided to educators were inadequate. However, Leigh (2006:5) posits that the fact that the identified problem can be related to job performance does not automatically mean that it can be resolved by training. The trainees themselves must also be willing to learn and accept change. It means that the training and development conducted to some extent did not yield the expected positive results regarding learner performance. The training that targets the broadening of the knowledge base of educators seems to have been insufficient.

The Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education 2009) presented to the Minister of Basic Education in October 2009 highlights that the provincial layering regarding the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* and multiple documentation confused educators regarding the level of the importance of the respective documents. It was unclear whether the documents were intended to either clarify or replace national policy documents, e.g. the existing *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*. The educator training provided focused on policy documents and guidelines and very little attention was devoted to the subject content (Department of Basic Education 2009b).

Lack of job involvement and organisational commitment

All the stakeholders in education should be committed to educational matters for sustainable development. According to Steers and Black (1994:87), there are two job attitudes that need recognition, namely job involvement and organisational commitment. Job involvement refers to the extent to which an employee shows an interest in and commitment to all the tasks that are assigned to him or her, while organisational commitment is about the strength of an individual employee's identification with the organisation. Inadequate provision of training and development of educators compromised the effective implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* in the Vhembe District in particular. According to Hackett (2003:5), training helps to improve the capability of an organisation to achieve its set organisational objectives. It therefore means that an inadequate provision of training and development will make the achievement of organisational objectives difficult or even impossible.

The inadequate allocation of training time to educators in the new curriculum could be viewed as a lack of organisational commitment by the Limpopo Department of Education in general and by the Vhembe District in particular. As a result, the new curriculum policy activities are not effectively co-ordinated. The absence of proper co-ordination of curriculum activities such as operational planning in the Vhembe District alienates curriculum advisors from the team on curriculum issues, especially when their monthly operational activity plans



are constantly disrupted by their district co-ordinators. As a result, curriculum advisors' commitments are affected.

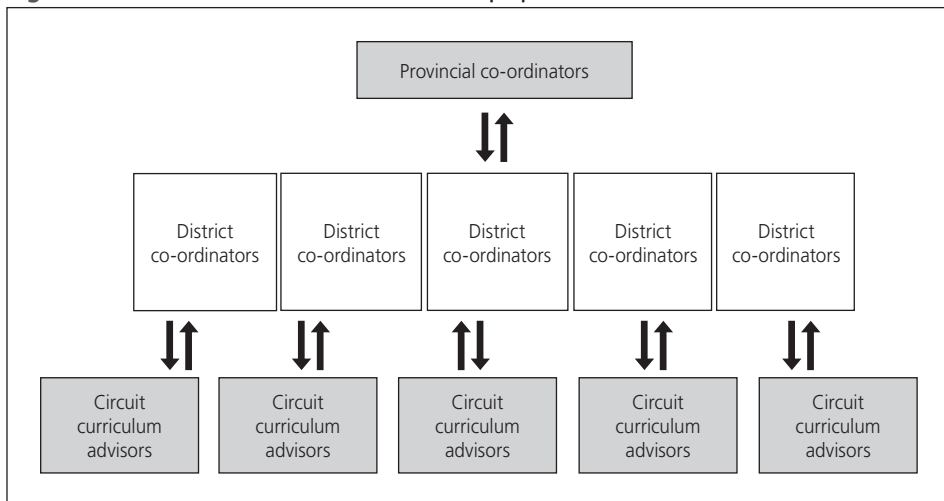
The curriculum advisors' activities are structured by the LDE, but are not well co-ordinated between the district and circuits, as would be expected in a reciprocal relationship (see Figure 2 below). According to the departmental organogram, there are curriculum advisors who serve as co-ordinators both at the provincial and at the district level. These officials, together with curriculum advisors based at the circuit level are expected to assist educators on training and curriculum support for the correct and effective implementation of the new curriculum policy in schools. The Vhembe district coordinators mostly use a top-down approach in decision-making which does not leave room for both consultation and participation by circuit-based curriculum advisors in planning curriculum activities.

Kuye and Ile (2007:73) argue that joint planning and consultation with relevant stakeholders are important elements for effective service delivery. Although the immediate seniors of curriculum advisors are their circuit managers, they are mostly bypassed by co-ordinators who communicate directly and delegate work to curriculum advisors at will. This is done on the basis of the fact that district programmes always supersede the circuit programmes. If this approach is not properly communicated and reviewed, it may easily be abused, compromising the effectiveness and commitment of the organisation.

The following is simple diagrammatic representation of how curriculum division is structured from the provincial level to the circuit level:

All the challenges that affect employees' job involvement and organisational commitment in achieving an organisation's objectives must be scrutinised. According to Kraiger (2002:70), there are many organisations that conduct annual surveys that assist in identifying factors affecting employee morale, retention and performance. Moskowitz (2008:4) identifies the following forces as having an impact on effective training: senior and middle managers, supervisors, co-workers, processes, resources, and all the equipment playing a role in inculcating new behaviours employees need to demonstrate after receiving training and development. All these forces enable managers to identify aspects that could inform the

Figure 2 Curriculum co-ordination in Limpopo Province



selection of training needs and/or content, as well as propose the time when such training should be provided.

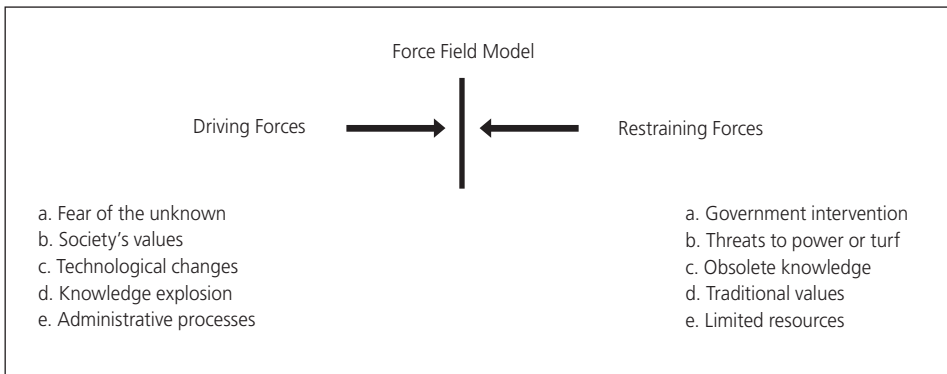
Employees in an organisation must be prepared to learn new ways of performing functions as they adapt to issues of transformation. Issues of commitment go beyond mere passive loyalty to the organisation (Steers and Black 1994:87). Commitment is a critical element for effective policy implementation for the provision of efficient and effective services by any government department.

Resistance to change

A well-planned and correctly implemented training and development programme is an important tool in bringing about quality procedures and performance improvement in an organisation. Employees who commit themselves seriously to training and development for the purposes of transformation are likely to become change agents of their organisation. According to Van der Waldt and Helmbold (1995:98), people are naturally doubtful of change for various reasons, for example, whether they will be required in the future, whether their skills will be appreciated and whether they will be able to keep up with the demand of the new developments. If these questions are not answered, it can lead to poor performance. Ornstein and Hunkins (2004:305-306) explain resistance to change as an indication of people finding themselves in an environment that is composed of competing forces, namely driving forces and restraining forces. It is mostly restraining forces that contribute to resistance to change by some educators towards the new curriculum. This is represented in a model referred to as a Force Field Model, as represented in Figure 3.

Educators in the Vhembe District experience the same kind of fears and challenges outlined in the figure above regarding the educational changes they face. Their resistance to curriculum change may be caused by fear of the unknown, as some may think they will lose their jobs and have to deal with obsolescence. Educators are therefore afraid of the new ways of performing their functions the new curriculum requires with it, for example, the OBE methodology. The educators' fears were corroborated by Salim Vally, who stated in the *Mail & Guardian* (July 23 to 29, 2010) that "the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) did not help teachers. It deepened insecurity because it was imposed and took away the autonomy of teachers".

Figure 3 Force Field Model



Source Adapted from Ornstein and Hunkins (2004:305)

The provision of training and development is about change in employees' knowledge and skill levels; changes in how the accumulated skills are effectively used; changes in the way in which the organisation processes are finalised; changes in how employees relate to one another; and changes in the culture of an organisation (Johnson 1993:58). Training is aimed at changing attitudes, increasing knowledge levels, as well as building the skills of the employees to improve their performance. Negative attitudes towards change and transformation have prevented most educators from effectively using the knowledge and skills they have acquired during training and development workshops to meet the desired set objectives of the LDE in general and of the Vhembe District in particular.

Inadequate knowledge level of trainers

The success of any training and development initiative depends on the quality of its trainers. However, the trainees, like the trainers, must have a positive attitude, show commitment and be willing to learn. There is a general belief regarding training that the quality of trainers, facilitators or educators who provide training are not always satisfactory according to Yeowart and Soobrayan (2003:254). When the new curriculum, the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*, was designed, curriculum advisors were trained to become facilitators of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* for educators.

According to the findings of the *Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* (2009b:56) most departmental officials' experience and knowledge level in policy issues are inadequate. These officials also have a superficial understanding of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*. The currently employed curriculum advisors have not been adequately trained. The provision of content training and the development of curriculum advisors through the Mathematics, Science and Technology College's (MASTEC) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme (Department of Education. Limpopo Province, 2009) was an indication that these curriculum advisors' content knowledge levels were still low. Wills (1998:77-83) argues that an organisation may recruit experienced trainers who may not have experience of the type of training they are expected to provide, further relevant training should then be provided. It therefore means that a trainer who is still learning will not be as productive and effective as an experienced trainer in achieving the training objectives. Stout (1993:10) maintains that competent, trained staff can only emerge if effective training and development are made available to trainers.

Multiple roles of curriculum advisors

When curriculum advisors were employed as subject specialists, they were not provided with a job description and/or information on the roles that are specific to their responsibilities. As a result, their roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and they differ from province to province. In addition to the high shortage of curriculum advisors, they were and still are expected to perform multiple roles. Besides curriculum support, they were also expected to conduct monitoring and whole school evaluation. Ideally, there has to be one curriculum advisor per subject per circuit, either in the General Education and Training (GET) or the Further Education and Training (FET) band. Due to the shortage of curriculum advisors they

also have to provide curriculum support not only in their allocated band, but in both the GET and FET bands.

The *Final Report: Ministerial Committee on National Education, Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU)* (Department of Basic Education, 2009a) presented to the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, states that “the failure to separate curriculum support and advisory roles from curriculum monitoring roles constrains the credibility of both”. This means that the roles of curriculum advisors are more focused on providing educator support than on a monitoring role. When curriculum advisors attempt to provide both roles, they risk compromising both roles and would ultimately fail to perform their curriculum support duties to educators diligently. As a result, the roles of curriculum advisors must be clearly defined if the new curriculum policy is to be correctly and effectively implemented in schools.

EDUCATORS’ PERSPECTIVE ON TRAINING CHALLENGES

The provision of training and development for the correct implementation of the new curriculum policy, the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* had its own challenges from the educators’ perspective. That is the failure to use training evaluation as a training measurement, the subject allocation and workload, and the training and development moratorium. These three issues are discussed in detail below.

Lack of training evaluation as training measurement

Evaluation is an essential stage in a training cycle used to measure the impact of training towards the achievement of the training objective in an organisation. According to Erasmus *et al.* (2006:212), evaluation entails “the systematic collection of descriptive and judgmental information necessary to make effective training decisions related to the selection, adoption, value and modification of various training activities”. This means that in the training and development process, evaluation is the last stage, and is intended to help determine the extent to which the training activities have achieved the training objectives. When trainers, supervisors and managers conduct evaluation in a work environment, they are engaging in integrating on-the-job and off-the-job training (Erasmus *et al.* 2005:473). This implies that lessons learnt from on-the-job and off-the-job training are combined and used to achieve the objectives of the organisation. Evaluation becomes a planned assessment of the total value of training and development conducted within an organisation with the intention of providing support on the identified gaps. The main purpose of evaluation is, as Stout (1993:122) has indicated, to check the effectiveness of training in terms of the employees’ application of their knowledge, skills and behaviour.

When the educators’ training workshops for the correct implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* (RSA 2002a, 2002b) were conducted, evaluation sheets were either not provided or not effectively used. As a result, the responses that educators as trainees gave, for example, regarding the inadequate time allocated for training workshops, were not responded to.



According to Erasmus *et al.* (2005:473-474), a failure to engage in evaluation effectively has a number of consequences. *Firstly*, it means that trainers are unable to assess the attitude of trainees (in this case, educator) regarding training and development. *Secondly*, trainers fail to measure the degree to which trainees have accumulated training knowledge, skills and all the concepts related to the training content that they have received. *Thirdly*, trainers are unable to assess whether there has been an improvement in the trainees' performance.

Since proper evaluation on the training and development of educators on the correct implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* (RSA 2002b) was not done, more needs-based responsive retraining workshops could not be conducted. This reflects a cyclical process which Sloman (1999:46) argues links evaluation and training needs that will trigger a further continuous training process. Moreover, if training evaluation is not done, the policy implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* could be compromised. (LDE 2011)

Subject allocation and workload

The shortage of well-qualified educators in South Africa in general has contributed to high educator workload in schools, especially in rural schools such as those in the Vhembe District. The November 2010 statistics on learner-educator ratio indicates that the 2009 national average learner-educator ratio was 29,6:1 (Education Statistics in South Africa 2009:7). The lower the number of learners a school has, the higher the workload in terms of subject allocation of educators. One of the challenges educators face in the Vhembe District in particular is what happens when training and development workshops for different subjects are organised and held simultaneously and sometimes at the same venue. Sometimes, subject-specific training workshops for different subjects are conducted simultaneously. Educators teaching different subjects in the same band, Further Education and Training (FET), are forced to choose one subject. In most cases, educators choose the subjects that they teach in Grade 12, regardless of the fact that all subjects are of equal importance. Lower grades are not taken seriously, although the Grade 12 results depend on the foundation prepared in the lower grades. As a result, educators are deprived of opportunities to broaden their content knowledge level. Regular changes in subject allocation by principals also affect their content knowledge, as educators may not have received training and development in those subjects. This would ultimately affect learner performance negatively in the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* in the Vhembe District.

Training and development moratorium

In any organisation that has to enforce effective and efficient training and development to improve employees' and organisational performance, adequate financial resources should be provided. However, challenges cannot be avoided during the training process. Moskowitz (2008:28) states that while it is sometimes difficult to plan training and development programmes, there are even more challenges in implementing them.

The financial constraints of the Limpopo Department of Education in 2009 have compelled the Department to impose some financial restrictions on both the Department and all five

districts, including Vhembe. The *Departmental Circular (Number 150 of 2009. Austerity Measures 2009/10(RSA 2009))*, requires all senior general managers, general managers and senior managers at head office, district senior managers and district financial managers, to reduce financial expenditure. As a result, payment of expenses relating to catering, overnight accommodation, workshops, conferences, symposiums and seminars were suspended, unless approved by the Head of Department (HOD) and/or the Senior General Manager (SGM). The departmental officials from different branches and sections were encouraged to use the departmental facilities and Multi-purpose Centres available for hosting their meetings and workshops. All these restrictive measures have negatively affected effective educator training for the correct implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* in schools in the Vhembe District.

Any budget allocation should be regarded as a formalised plan that is quantified in terms of the organisation's activities. Therefore any budget cuts are likely to affect the planned activities of the organisation concerned, thereby making it seem as if the organisation is not consistent in its support of its planned activities. Kraiger (2002:296) argues that training is sometimes delivered in an organisational environment that is not supportive, with trainees who are not effectively motivated or interested, and whose focus is mainly on short-term results or outcomes. The *Austerity Measures* circular (RSA 2009) has therefore imposed a serious constraint on the provision of effective training and development workshops for educators. This adds to the lack of training as the ones provided earlier were inadequate for the effective implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*. As a result, educator workshops are increasingly being planned and conducted in the afternoon and during the weekends to cut costs on catering and overnight accommodation. Sloman (1999:18) is of the view that people are an organisation's most valuable assets and should therefore be properly and effectively trained. Hence, effective training should become possible when all resources that include financial resources are made available so that training objectives can be achieved by the Department.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING

This article proposes the following possible intervention strategies to address challenges in the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy* in the Vhembe District:

- reopening teacher colleges;
- establishing partnerships with universities to enable the maximum utilisation of resources such as laboratories and libraries, and inviting knowledgeable academics to share their knowledge on policy implementation (both theory and practice) with the Department and educators as implementers of the new curriculum in schools;
- monitoring and managing the training and development budget effectively;
- taking seriously the provision of adequate training time for educator training;
- defining the roles of curriculum advisors clearly to avoid confusion and inefficiency;
- encouraging proper co-ordination between the district and circuits to promote teamwork, participatory democracy to avoid disillusionment and frustration; and developing a training model that values evaluation in the training process.



CONCLUSION

The main aim of providing training and development in an organisation is to facilitate change through capacity building. This article shows that the implementation of the new education curriculum policy i.e. the *National Curriculum Statement 2002 Policy*, is facilitated by the provision of training and development to educators on the correct ways to implement the new policy. The article proposes some intervention strategies that could assist in addressing challenges faced during the implementation of the new curriculum policy in the Vhembe District and suggests that the seriousness of the educator training challenges presented in the article do not mean that these challenges cannot be resolved, but that commitment from both the Department of Basic Education and educators is needed in making the implementation of the new curriculum policy a success.

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