

Adequacy of the Teaching Materials for Implementing the Life Orientation Curriculum in Selected Fort Beaufort District High Schools, Eastern Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The paper reports the findings of a teaching materials study in selected Fort Beaufort District high schools in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study described in this paper adopted a qualitative research approach and employed a case study design. Six teachers, six principals, and thirty-six learners were purposively sampled from six high schools. Data were collected using focus groups and individual interviews and were analysed thematically. The results indicated lack of teaching and learning materials in most of the selected schools. It was concluded that lack of teaching materials affected the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum. The paper therefore, recommends that the Department of Education provide adequate teaching and learning materials in Life Orientation in high schools as a matter of urgency.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching materials are essential for effective implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. Teaching and learning will not be successful if there are no good teaching materials to teach Life Orientation programs (Roberts 2016). Teaching materials contribute immensely towards the development of knowledge as they are a key source of information, especially in Africa's schools, which are often starved of alternative teaching materials and other sources of relevant information (Eisner 2017). The researchers indicate that teaching materials are an important factor in curriculum implementation. Several researchers, such as Nilson (2016) and Eisner (2017) identify reading materials as important for children's reading and writing abilities. Parkay et al. (2010) state that teaching materials are required for the success of all school programs. Money is needed for teaching materials to implement the Life Orientation program. Research has identified shortage of financial

support as one of the reasons for unsuccessful programs (Parkay et al. 2010).

In sub-Saharan African, countries need a large amount of money for the Life Orientation (Life Skills) curriculum development, delivery and innovation (Tomalin and Stempleski 2013; Bwayo 2014). These studies found that the entire setup of support services, school inspection and supervision, in-service teacher education, curriculum development, and maintenance of school furniture, equipment and physical facilities, has deteriorated throughout the region. The poor quality of these resources can compromise the implementation process and the quality of education. Christiaans (2006) and Prinsloo (2007) add that the focused nature of competence-based Life Orientation programs, involves heavy investment in materials and the teachers' training. These authors indicate the importance of teaching materials availability to the development and implementation of appropriate and relevant Life Orientation programs in South Africa.

The information processing theory highlights the significance of using right instructional materials to promote learning (Schunk 2004; Lajoie 2011). This theory highlights the role of materials in controlling attention. Approaches that would advance and retain learners' attention should capture the interest of learners and

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building variety into a lesson. The approaches should be applied in conjunction with appropriate and exciting instructional materials (Schunk 2004: 147; Lajoie 2011). Life Orientation is a hands-on discipline which requires learners to understand lessons taught and to be able to apply what they learn in their daily lives. This view is confirmed by Schunk (2004) and Lajoie (2011) who posit that, cognitive learning theory highlights the significance of using experiments in the science classroom to aid discovery learning.

Studies on the relations between input and output in schools have revealed that performance of learners in developing nations is essentially dependent on good school inputs, and not on external socio-economic factors (Abiy 2015). In other words, it is possible to improve Life Orientation performance by using strategies such as supplying learners with textbooks and other materials. Abiy (2015) is of the opinion that one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways of improving school efficiency is adequate provision of teaching and learning materials.

The curriculum needs support from responsible authorities in terms of educational funding (Glatthorn et al. 2006; Taylor and Sidhu 2012). In many countries, like South Africa, Life Orientation is funded by the Department of Education (Frenk et al. 2010). Funding, management and instructional materials distribution impact the performance of schools and of skills development (Frenk et al. 2010). For example, schools which are well-funded are able to procure adequate and up to date Life Orientation materials for their learners. A number of studies show that Life Orientation is affected by inadequate funding and lack of materials, facilities and equipment (Rooth 2005; Christiaans 2006; Prinsloo 2007; McLaren 2015). This view is shared by Gizachew (2012) who notes that lack of resources may lead to failure in innovation.

In South Africa, Life Orientation is funded by the Department of Education. However, the public and the media have raised concerns about factors militating against learners' performance which include inadequate teaching materials (Jacobs 2011; Helleve et al. 2011). It is not clear what is happening in the classrooms regarding the adequacy of the teaching materials teachers use in teaching the Life Orientation curriculum. This paper therefore, seeks to establish the adequacy of the teaching materials teachers use in teaching the Life Orientation curriculum in high

schools in the Fort Beaufort District, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Theoretical Framework

This paper was informed by the Rogan and Grayson's implementation theory. Rogan and Grayson (2003) base their theory of implementation on three main constructs: profile of implementation, capacity to support innovation, and support from outside agencies.

This paper employed the construct of support from outside agency which is divided into two: material support and non-material support. The focus of this paper is on the material support which may include teaching materials, infrastructure such as specialist rooms, facilities and other equipment used in the learning process. Teaching materials are important as limited teaching and learning materials can limit the performance of both teachers and students. The researchers investigated this to confirm whether the adequacy of the teaching materials for implementing the LO curriculum in Selected Fort Beaufort District High Schools is in line with what is stipulated above.

Objectives

The main objective of this paper was to investigate the adequacy of the teaching materials Life Orientation teachers use in the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum in selected high schools in the Fort Beaufort District in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. This paper sought also to: identify types and sources of teaching materials teachers used in teaching the Life Orientation curriculum.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This paper used a case study design as it was qualitative in nature. The researchers chose this method because of its capability to give a thorough and full account of the adequacy of the teaching materials Life Orientation teachers use in the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum in selected high schools in the Fort Beaufort District in the Eastern Cape (Marshall and Rossman 2014).

Participants

The participants in this study were 48 in total, six principals, six Life Orientation teachers

and thirty-six learners in six selected high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education District were selected. The most experienced teachers in Life Orientation were selected. Principals and other teachers were consulted to identify the six teachers and thirty-six learners. Three learners each in Grades 11 and 12 were purposively selected. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the six high schools within each of the six high school clusters in the district so as not to be biased. In other words, one high school from each cluster was selected. Thus the schools, principals, teachers and learners were all purposively selected.

Research Instruments

Semi-structured and focus group interviews were used to gather information on the teaching materials teachers used in teaching the Life Orientation curriculum. Semi-structured interviews were used to solicit information from the teachers and principals. The interviews facilitated direct interaction between the researchers and six Life Orientation teachers and six principals from six selected high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education District.

The semi-structured interview procedure allowed the researchers, first to ask a series of structured questions before going deeper by using open-ended questions in order to obtain more data and allow respondents to express themselves (Onwuegbuzie and Byers 2014). As a data gathering technique, the semi-structured interview's flexibility and adaptability permitted the researchers to probe for deeper responses, to follow up leads, to have respondents elaborate on original responses, to obtain additional and more detailed data, and to clarify answers (Nalere and Yago 2015).

Six focus group interviews, that is, six groups of six learners per school in Grades 11 and 12 (three learners from each grade) were conducted. Focus group interviews were employed in order to gain learners' understanding of the adequacy, types and sources of teaching materials Life Orientation teachers used in the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum. The researchers noticed that focus group interviews allowed interaction between participants that highlighted their view of the teaching materials Life Orientation teachers use in the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum in selected high schools in

the Fort Beaufort District (Krueger and Casey 2014).

Procedure

To conduct the present research, the researchers sought permission from the Provincial Department of Education. In addition, permission was obtained from the principals of each selected schools and dates for conducting the interviews arranged.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected were analysed by clustering common themes, to uncover the main issues that arose. The issues were then put together as findings for the study (Miles et al. 2013). The researchers started the procedure of data analysis by writing out verbatim audiotaped interviews. The results were double-checked with the participants and the raw data from the interview were coded in order to develop data sets. Responses were treated according to the research objectives to which the participants were responding. In the paper the participants are identified as follows: Focus groups (FG1-FG6), the Life Orientation teachers (T1-T6), the school principals (P1-P6) and the high schools (S1-S6). The coding of the participants is school-matched. For instance, FG1, T1 and P1 are from School 1 (S1); FG2, T2 and P2 are from S2, and so on.

RESULTS

The results of the research are discussed below.

Types and Sources of Life Orientation Teaching Materials

The paper sought to find out about the types and sources of Life Orientation teaching materials. The following are the responses from the participants.

T1 noted: *Government provides the materials through the Department of Education. These include: textbooks, government-developed teaching files.*

T3 said much the same: *The Department of Education supplies the learning and teaching materials which are textbooks and charts.*

T5 was of the opinion that: *The teacher provides materials like magazines and pictures with learners' support. The school also buys textbooks.*

T4 agreed: *Textbooks are provided by the school. I also source for relevant materials for Life Orientation teaching, magazines and newspapers,* as did T6 mentioned the contribution of learners themselves.

The principals concurred that the Department of Education assisted in the provision of teaching materials.

P1 stated: *The school, through the Department, provides textbooks and government-developed teaching files for Life Orientation teaching.*

Some of the principals also commented that the teachers and learners also provided materials for Life Orientation.

P6 commented: *These [textbooks] are provided by the school, learners and teachers source for extra materials such as box, ropes and tapes.*

FG3, FG5 and FG6 all concurred with what their teachers had said about the sources of teaching materials: For instance, FG3 pointed out: *Teaching and learning materials such as textbooks and charts are provided by the government.*

FG5: *Our learning materials, textbooks, magazines and pictures come from the school and district.*

And FG6: *Teachers and learners provide materials like the music player for LO because we do not get enough materials from the department.*

The findings above reveal textbooks as the most frequently reported Life Orientation teaching materials in schools. However, other materials and equipment such as government-developed teaching files, posters, charts, magazines and newspapers were also available in small quantities at some schools. This section also revealed different sources of the teaching resources used for the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum. Some of the participants revealed the Department of Education as the source of the teaching materials while others revealed schools, teachers and learners as the source of the teaching materials used for the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum.

Availability of Teaching Materials in Life Orientation

The paper sought to find out about the availability of teaching materials used in Life Orientation.

It was discovered that many learners and teachers did not have teaching materials. In most of the schools visited, there was an inadequacy of textbooks. For this reason, learners in some of the schools shared textbooks in the ratio 2:1, and in the worst cases, a ratio of 5:1. The challenges around teaching materials were expressed during the interviews with teachers in the selected schools.

T5 pointed out:

Textbooks and other teaching materials are not adequate. The reason is that learners do not return textbooks when they are leaving, which leads to a shortage of these textbooks every year. Currently, learners in this school share Life Orientation textbooks in a ratio of 5:1.

T3 confirmed that:

Lack of textbooks and other teaching materials in Life Orientation is a serious problem. It affects smooth co-ordination among teachers. The three LO teachers have to share one textbook. This consumes time and increases the teachers' workload. Teachers are also forced to combine classes because the textbooks are not enough.

This teacher added that:

Learners get weary of writing notes because they prefer to have their own textbooks for personal study. If the learner who is keeping the textbook is absent in school, it becomes a problem for the other ones to learn without the textbook.

However, because of inadequate teaching materials, some teachers have opted to improvise local materials as teaching materials. The following was a comment from T5 in this regard:

Teaching materials and textbooks are not adequate. I go around to colleagues in other schools to get materials. At times I use magazines, newspapers, posters and so on for teaching Life Orientation because we do not have enough teaching materials. I also photocopy textbooks for learners to make up for shortages of textbooks; but this is expensive, time-consuming, and increases the workload.

The lack of adequate teaching materials was also noted by learners themselves. This was evident in one of the focus group interviews when the learners suggested that the school should buy more textbooks. The following responses were recorded in FG1:

The teacher faces the problem of a shortage of teaching materials in our school. We do not have enough textbooks. This makes learners to share. When the learner that is keeping the textbook does not come to school, the other learners suffer and this wastes the teacher's time.

They further stated: The government should buy more teaching and learning materials for learners.

FG5 concurred that:

Teachers and learners do not have enough teaching and learning materials. This makes learning difficult.

Interviews revealed that some teachers were improvising and had become resourceful in implementing the Life Orientation curriculum. As was evident in this section, the teachers were improvising because Life Orientation teaching materials were not adequate. It was noted that some of the teachers who were not trained to teach Life Orientation got frustrated and lost interest. This was evident in the interview responses of teachers where T1 stated that he felt frustrated with teaching Life Orientation because there were many problems:

Teaching Life Orientation is frustrating because of the challenges of inadequate teaching materials, lack of support from colleagues, and lack of training.

However, some Life Orientation teachers stated that they found that there were adequate teaching materials for Life Orientation. As T2 pointed out:

There are many textbooks on Life Orientation at the school because Life Orientation is "new". Many new books came as samples for teachers. They are adequate because there are many books available for use.

T3 concurred:

Textbooks are adequate. Because we are under Section 21. We get money from the Government to buy textbooks. Textbooks are available for learners.

On the whole, the interviewed principals supported the views of the Life Orientation teachers.

P1 stated:

The materials are adequate for teaching Life Orientation. As a principal, my concerns are supply of textbooks and practical materials like scales, slabs and so on. The Department makes a direct deposit into the school account, and we buy textbooks for our learners and teachers with the funds.

The problems around textbook and teaching materials supply seemed complex, and varied from one school to another, as the following comments from the other interviewed principals indicate:

P3 pointed out:

There is a challenge this year because we did not get funds timely from Government. Ordering of textbooks takes time, because the demands from the Eastern Cape are high.

P4 stated:

Textbooks are not enough, so learners share textbooks in the ratio 2:1.

P5 said:

Textbooks used to be adequate, but learners do not return copies given to them, and this makes the textbooks not to be adequate.

P6 commented:

The teaching materials are adequate, but other material resources like sport equipment are not enough.

This means that the Life Orientation curriculum is probably not being implemented fully in many schools. Discussion with all the participants (principals, teachers and learners) revealed a consensus that adequate material resources are absolutely essential to the effective implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

DISCUSSION

This paper examined the adequacy of the teaching materials used in teaching the Life Orientation curriculum in selected Fort Beaufort District High Schools in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

It was revealed through this paper that textbooks are the most available teaching materials used in teaching Life Orientation. However, other materials such as Department-developed teaching files, posters, charts, magazines, pictures, newspapers, tapes and music playing devices were also available in small quantities at some schools. Nilson (2016) and Eisner (2017) point that textbooks seem to contribute immensely towards the development of knowledge, as they are a key source of information, especially in Africa's schools, which are often starved of alternative teaching materials and other sources of relevant information.

Another finding in this paper was that the Department of Education provides the money

to state schools for textbooks, and for a very limited number of teaching materials. This paper also revealed that, despite the state funding of textbooks, the funds provided are not adequate to purchase sufficient textbooks, let alone other teaching materials causing many schools not to have enough of these materials and facilities. Studies by Legotlo et al. (2002) and Newton (2011) on the perceptions of stakeholders on the causes of poor performance in Grade 12 in South Africa revealed that one of the reasons behind learners' failure is a shortage of textbooks, amongst other things. This was confirmed by parents, school governing bodies, principals, teachers and learners (Legotlo et al. 2002; Newton 2011).

Data gathered from this study revealed that teachers and learners had been improvising materials and became resourceful in implementing the Life Orientation curriculum by sourcing materials such as newspapers and magazines. It was revealed that in some of the selected schools teachers photocopied textbooks for learners to make up for shortages. However, this was expensive, time-consuming, and increased teachers' workload. Skinner (2016) and Ko and Rossen (2017) found that teachers had been taught to improvise wherever possible. In other words, after attending university, teachers became more resourceful.

In most of the selected schools it was observed that there was an inadequacy of textbooks, and learners shared Life Orientation textbooks in the ratio of 2:1, and in extreme cases 5:1. Rogan and Grayson (2003) and Richards and Rodgers (2014) found that a shortage of teaching materials is an important factor in the implementation of a program, and that the capacity of teachers can be affected by this factor.

It is worth noting that Life Orientation is a key part of the balanced curriculum in South African schools, and it would be good if more funding could be provided towards the provision of teaching and learning materials. Clearly this has to be a given priority as a matter of urgency in order to implement the Life Orientation curriculum. Kelly and Melograno (2004) and Bruns et al. (2011) confirm that adequate provision of teaching materials in schools would make it possible to implement an achievement-based curriculum model that could guide Life Orientation teachers step-by-step through the process of translating curriculum theory into functional

practice. There were clear indications that shortages of textbooks and other teaching materials affected both the learners and teachers, which could result in the provision of an unbalanced Life Orientation curriculum.

It was also revealed in this paper that when a learner in possession of a textbook is absent, teaching and learning becomes difficult for both the teacher and the other learners. Inadequacy of textbook supply also made learners run around in order to have access to the few available textbooks. Learners often visit the homes of other learners who are in possession of the textbooks to get their homework done. Participants attributed the shortages of textbooks partly to learners' failure to return some of the textbooks given to them at the end of the previous year. The researchers noted that this reason requires further scrutiny. If learners failed to return textbooks, it implied poor administration and enforcement of regulations on the part of the principals and teachers.

This paper further revealed that some of the schools had adequate teaching materials for teaching the Life Orientation curriculum. It was indicated that teachers compared and used the best textbooks that treated the topic they were teaching because there were different textbooks of different quality. According to Rogan and Grayson (2003), Kelly (2010) and Parkay et al. (2010) the effectiveness of curriculum implementation may be determined by school teaching materials. Adequate instructional materials, which include quality textbooks, teaching aids and stationery, need to be supplied on time in large quantities. Educationists are generally in agreement that learners seem to perform well with adequate resources in respect of classrooms, libraries, textbooks, finances and relevant curriculum (Ornstein and Hunkins 2004; Likoko et al. 2013).

CONCLUSION

It was revealed in this paper that inadequate provision of teaching materials is a serious problem affecting the delivery of quality Life Orientation programs in the selected high schools in the Fort Beaufort District, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The literature and findings have clearly shown the importance of teaching materials in the implementation of the Life Orientation programs in high schools.

The most common available and commonly used teaching materials in all the selected high schools were textbooks. This paper established that the Department of Education supports the schools by providing funds for the provision of textbooks and other teaching materials in teaching Life Orientation. It is usually the only source of such funding and provision. However, the funds are usually not enough to provide adequate Life Orientation teaching materials, even a full supply of textbooks, for all the learners. Delay by the Department of Education in releasing the funds meant for ordering textbooks also contributed to the inadequacy of textbooks in schools.

The paper revealed that the inadequacy of textbooks affected both the learners and teachers; it made learners share textbooks, sometimes at a ratio of 5:1. It was also observed that both the teachers and learners had to make up for the lack of textbooks by looking for alternatives in media like magazines and newspapers. Some teachers had to combine classes, and learners copied “never-ending notes”. It was also found that in some of the selected schools, teachers photocopied textbooks for learners in order to make up for shortages of textbooks. It was also reported that some schools have variety and adequate materials for teaching the Life Orientation curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these findings, this paper recommends that the Department of Education provide adequate teaching materials in Life Orientation in schools as a matter of urgency. This would help teachers to implement the curriculum and provide the most needed opportunity for learners to live meaningful and more active lives. Also, school principals and deputies, who are responsible for making requisitions for the purchasing of teaching materials, should be pressured to expedite this process, so that teachers who teach Life Orientation would receive an adequate supply in good time. Parents should be encouraged to support the Department of Education and schools in the provision of usable and locally relevant material resources in Life Orientation. Furthermore, schools should put in place, measures to ensure that all books are returned at the end of the year.

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