

# Exploring Factors Influencing Learner Performance in the Economic and Management Sciences in Rural Kwazulu-Natal Province of South Africa

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The study explores various factors influencing learner performance in EMS in rural South Africa, using qualitative method. Purposive sampling was used to select the ward where the research was conducted, the schools and the educators. Data was collected from 17 samples through the use of semi-structured interviews which were conducted for 17 teachers, 5 of which were Heads of Department across 17 secondary schools. Collected data were coded and analysed using themes. The findings of the study amongst others show that recruitment of unqualified teachers, lack of exposure to commercial subjects, negatively affects teaching and learning activities around the subject.

**Key words:** *Economics and Management Sciences (EMS), motivation, performance, South Africa*

## Introduction

A new era in South African history, began in 1994 with the first democratic election, ending apartheid, brought with it the much-needed restructuring of the South African educational curriculum. The curriculum known as 2005 was launched in Cape Town on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 1997. It emerged as the tool that was going to establish the educational norms in all South African schools. Chisholm (2005) and DBE (2002) maintained that curriculum 2000 (C2000) and curriculum 2005 (C2005) were subsequently scrutinized in later years, and the scrutiny gave birth to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). This catered for all subjects taught in high schools inclusive of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). Meanwhile,

according to Jacobs (1999), the initial construction of this learning area was driven by social reconstructionist and critical theories. Jacobs, Vikalisa and Gawe (2004) defined social reconstruction as creating a new environment in school. Social Reconstructionism (SR) is mainly concerned with reconstructing the existing environment. Social Reconstructionism also called for the reconstruction of the procedures of the school through experimentalism (Hullfish, 1933). While taking note of the definition of Social Reconstructionism, it is worth examining critical theories, as these focus more on what is happening in classrooms and schools. Integration, according to Christie (2001), it cannot be taken lightly, in particular considering the fact that current education in South Africa is underperforming, as compared to other countries on the continent. Studies have advocated that underperforming secondary schools in South Africa face chronic problems with poor performance, which often manifests itself in a high rate of grade repetition. Nieman and Monyai (2006) defined underperforming schools as those failing to achieve Grade 12 pass rate of more than 60% either in urban or rural settlements. Conversely, there is a challenge of poor matric results in Accounting; the problem is presumed to be due to the fact that EMS is not well taught at the lower grades, of which EMS is the foundation for Accounting. This may emanate from the shortage of EMS teachers since teachers are not well trained and the English language is a barrier to the teaching material. Other factors may be a lack of support from the head of department and that teachers are not given adequate time to attend training workshops (Department of Basic Education, 2017). The convergence of Accounting, Economics and Business Studies under the one learning area of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) seems to have had an impact on the attainment of EMS related educational objectives. In order to display admirable academic achievements in the EMS learning area, the learner has to be well- informed and knowledgeable in all the different subjects that make up Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). This seems to have posed difficulty and challenges to the learning abilities of learners especially those in rural areas. Hence, the reason for this study is to investigate the factors influencing learner performance in Economic and Management Science's classroom.

### **Conceptualization of concepts**

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) defines EMS as a practical subject that equips learners with real-life skills for personal development and the development of the community. EMS deals with efficient and effective use of different types of private and public or collective resources to satisfy people's needs and wants. It reflects critically on the impact of resources exploitation on the environment and on people. EMS also deals with effective management of scarce resources in order to maximise profit.

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2012), the subject Economic and Management Science deals with the efficient and effective use of different types of private, public or collective resources to satisfy people's needs and wants. It reflects critically on the impact of the resources exploitation on the environment and the people. The subject EMS deal

with the effective management of scarce resources in order to maximize profit. The subject is practical and equip learners with real life skills for personal development and the community also benefit, it is a practical subject. The activities given to the learners should contribute to the personal development and sustainable growth and the community must also benefit (Department of Basic Education, 2002).

The subject Economic and Management Sciences deals with the efficient and effective use of different types of private, public or collective resources to satisfy people's needs and wants. It reflects critically on the impact of resource exploitation on the environment and on people. It also deals with effective management of scarce resources in order to maximise profit.

Economic and Management Sciences is a practical subject that equips learners with real-life skills for personal development and the development of the community. The tasks set should contribute to personal development and should promote the idea of sustainable economic growth and the development of the community.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

Research methodology is employed to test the hypothesis of the research. The research methodology seeks to outline the research design, sampling technique and design, research instruments and data analysis. According to Kumar (2019), the research design is the most important part of the preliminary research which would help a researcher to map out a research approach, with the intention of answering the main research question. This study used a qualitative method research design. It is a useful device because of its heavy reliance on qualitative approach.

The sampling strategy adopted for this study was purposive as participants were educators who have taught EMS for many years. Purposive sampling allowed the researchers to choose respondents who are knowledgeable, informative and have enough experience in the subject under investigation (Kumar, 2019). These participants were involved because they have been teaching this subject for many years, and they have been exposed to workshops at the preparatory stage to gain more knowledge and skills to implement integration.

Furthermore, purposive sampling was applied in this regard to select participants to be interviewed. Creswell (2014) opines that purposive sampling is a necessary process in research as the population of which a particular phenomenon is to be studied. Kumar (2019) maintains that sampling the target population depends on the research question in order to determine the sample. Meanwhile, the participants of this study comprise 17 purposively selected educators from across 17 secondary schools based in rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Meanwhile, 5 out of the 17 educators were also heads of department (HoDs). The information from the interview sessions were recorded using audio tape recorder.

Additionally, the study used semi-structured interviews in order to in-depth information on the subject matter. Interview schedule guide was used during the interview sessions. This aided uniformity in the questions that were asked during each interview session. Semi-structured interviews were adopted because they allowed the researchers to observe the non-verbal and the verbal cues of the respondent. Also, they afforded the researchers the opportunity to ask further questions following the responses of the interviewees to certain questions. Interviews are employed to gain access to below-the-surface information (Creswell, 2014). They are advantageous to researchers because they yield high response rates. The interviews were important because each educator's answers reflected his or her perceptions about the challenges facing the teaching of EMS. The pieces of information retrieved via interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis procedure.

## Results

### THEMATIC ANALYSIS

#### Lack of motivation and lack of skills by accounting teachers

Academic qualifications of the respondents are the focus of this educational exercise, because it exposes the qualifications of the individuals who play a vital role in the accomplishment of the class-related objectives. However, IR4 said that qualifications mean little when teaching EMS:

*“One is qualified to teach but truly speaking one is not confident to teach EMS since it its three in one as you know that no person can be the master of three things that are different”*

The interaction with the research participants revealed that 10.5% of interviewees believed that the availability of the qualified EMS teachers is poor. IR15 who is also a HOD stated:

*“As much as we do not have qualified teachers who can teach EMS, there are not enough EMS teachers that meet the demands of qualified EMS teachers. The very few that have been train I do not see them in this career and in the school and you see that when you try to ask neighbouring schools for assistance even in high school no one is confident to come and assist when are being asked to help”*

The research unearths the challenges associated with a particular phenomenon. The absence of EMS teachers, who can enable learners to clearly comprehend the relevance of EMS in everyday life, contributes to the misinformation attached to EMS. EMS teachers can immensely contribute to the performance of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)

learners' that is below of what is expected. This is one of the clues that can help in the formulation of the effective turnaround strategy in the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) performance in the Mandeni Ward. The effective turnaround strategy in the EMS learning space should take into consideration the effort of making EMS practical with the aim of making EMS a more practical learning area.

It emerged from the interviews held with HoDs that the majority of teachers have the required qualification and pedagogical content knowledge to teach at the senior phase. They are proud of having qualified teachers in their departments because they add value in commerce subjects. However, the concern from the SMT, in particular the HoDs is that there are few EMS qualified teachers in the phase. This has resulted into assigning the EMS workload to teachers who are not professionally qualified to teach the subject. The picture painted by most HoDs who participated in the interview acknowledged that this remains the cause for concern:

*“Being a HoD for this subject gives a headache, this is because we don't have enough EMS teachers who are qualified to teach the EMS as a subject. Every time we have to employ teachers in this field, they are either competent in business studies and economics, or economics or accounting”.*

The struggle for EMS teachers is well documented in the school fraternity, and it is particular in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, furthermore evidence points to the fact the success of EMS senior phase learners nationally was shocking, and a national disaster (Kgosana, 2006). The competence of employing relevant teachers to teach specific subjects lies with the principals and his/her HoDs (Department of Basic Education, 2012). As a result, HoDs find it find it very difficult to work with teachers who have not done any of the commerce subjects in their schooling (high school) and only done it in their professional training. IR4

*“Our primary responsibility is to supervise both senior and novice teachers to understand the policy of teaching and learning as well the assessment. The idea that you have to teach a teacher is absurd and ridiculous so say the least.”*

The aim of any teacher is to share knowledge with his or her learners and assess their understanding continuously as he or she teaches. The responsibilities entrusted to teachers are enormous however they can only be achievable if the teachers are qualified to teach EMS. The vitality, effectiveness and the educational benefit of trained teachers is clearly grasped in the work of Rampa (2010), who states in her educational work that:

*“Since learning is not just limited to knowledge acquisition, for effective learning to occur, learners need to be equipped with appropriate skills, which means they need to know how to learn in order to be fully successful. These skills are developed through classroom interactions and classroom dialogue by trained professionals whose aim is not just to impart or introduce knowledge, or new material, but to ensure that learning at a deeper level takes place and*

*progress is made by individual students. To assert, that this can be done by any unqualified individual with subject expertise, or indeed to liken it to parenting, is, frankly, both insulting and ridiculous”.*

This finding concurs with the findings of the work of Rampa (2010). Meanwhile, the qualification helps because the training that accompanies the qualification immerses the teacher in the pedagogies of imparting knowledge to the learner. The lack of training in teachers teaching Economic Management Science is clearly in the message found in the words of one of the respondents in the words of IR9 who stated that:

*“Teachers who are having no high school background of commercial subject are not confident to teach EMS because it requires the knowledge in depth of each individual subject”*

### **English proficiency of EMS learners**

In Mandeni ward all schools that participated in the study are schools that are doing English as first additional language and yet it is the language of teaching and learning. EMS just like any other subject with the exception of another language is offered in English. This create problem to learners who are not conversant with English. Such learners struggle to understand the basic concepts in EMS. One of the ideas behind the researchers’ goal of discovering the factors influencing learners’ performance in EMS was to investigate the role played by the English language in achieving the purpose of EMS education. According to (Department of Basic Education, 2002), the purpose of EMS is to equip learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will enable them to participate in, contribute to adapt to and survive in a complex economic society. It is evident from the respondents’ statements that it becomes a challenge for learners to understand English with ease in the senior phase. The question that motivated the researchers were: does the English Language negatively affect the attainment of EMS related goals in the classroom? The response received from the participants IR13 was:

*“The English language is a barrier to learners as a result they do not want to do research project given to them. It’s improving the understanding of English and encourages them to do the project given to them”.*

Proficiency in English plays a vital role in the understanding of EMS as a learning area. The lack of competency in English presents a challenge in the classroom not only in the EMS learning space but in most learning areas. In most learning areas English is the prevalent language and the prevalence of English time and again becomes a barrier that prevents the fruitful teacher-learner interaction. The existence of a challenge is clearly revealed in the respondent words of IR17:

*“The challenge is the English that we are using in the teaching of EMS. The pronunciation of terms can also be difficult for learners. EMS is taught in English so the language barrier is a problem in our learners”.*

English is the cornerstone of the learning space where EMS is being taught. EMS learners will soon be participants in a global economic environment ruled by participants who are using English as medium of communication. 16% of the respondents rated their learners attributed the poor performance in EMS to the lack of essential English language skills. 53% of the participants revealed that their learners possess a fair proficiency of the English language. 26% of the population surveyed maintained that the proficiency of the English language of their learners is average. In this study average means that the learner’s competency of English enables them to clearly understand elementary instructions not the complex language that is sometimes used in some textbooks. The existence the average learner’s English level calls for the educator to become an active and observant facilitator The discovery of the fact that 53% of the participants learners possess an average proficiency of the English language ignited a feeling of restlessness in the researchers because large chunk of the population indicated that their learners do not have a full grasp of the elements of English which makes a learner successful and competent in Economic and Management Science (EMS) learning space. Another clue about the effects of incompetency in English is disclosed by Interviewee Respondent’s (IR2) revealing response:

*“The challenge that impacts negatively the teaching of EMS is the English language learners are unable to understand English when you are teaching you find that after explaining a particular topic or concept, most learners find it difficult to answer questions correctly”.*

It is also imperative to state that only a small percentage clearly stated that their learners have a very good command of the English language. IR16 articulated the lack of English:

*“Another factor is poor learner performance in English language. It is not something new that learners perform poorly and the department knows, that is why they are now measuring the learner performance in English language as a subject, they know that every subject is taught through a language and unfortunate for us our home language is IsiZulu and our first additional language is English. The language of teaching and learning is English, which is our first additional language which is not our mother tongue. So if learners perform poorly in English, how are we expecting them to perform in the teaching and learning of the EMS which is taught in the very same language which they cannot perform well in it”.*

A fair command of English by learners sometimes compels the teacher to code switch. None of the participants stated that their learners have a command of the English language that is excellent. The outcry about the debilitating effect of not having a good grasp of the English language is evident in the words of IR4. IR4 maintained:



*“Barrier in the teaching of EMS is the language used as a medium of instruction, the language used in teaching EMS is English and our learners don’t have good understanding of English. The jargon used in EMS is mainly English”.*

The above statement IR4 is supported by IR6, who stated that:

*“Challenge of the English language is also important because our challenge is that its needs a specific language for the subject because of the nature of the subject EMS”.*

Both IR4 and IR6 revealed one of the stumbling blocks in the effective teaching of EMS. The research exercise is a useful tool that can be employed as springboard of an effective turnaround strategy in the classroom where EMS is taught. The perceptions, attitudes and input of the research participants reveals what needs to be done in order to gradually improve the current plight that exist in the Economic and Management Science (EMS) learning space. The clues of what might positively influence the area where EMS is taught are clearly found in the revealing responses of the research respondents. It is necessary to bear in mind that human beings tend to shy away from activities that exposes one’s shortcoming or educational deficiency the challenge for English usability learners is confirmed by IR13. The reality of English being an obstacle is exposed in the words of IR13:

*“The English language is a barrier as a result they do not want to do research project given to them. It’s improving the understanding of English and encourages them to do the project given to them”. It is imperative to also realize the attachment of EMS related goals is largely dependent on the availability of qualified EMS teachers.*

### **Teacher’s attitude towards of EMS**

Presmeg (2006) states that in South Africa curriculum designers, educators and all stakeholders in the teaching and learning circles are being encouraged to shift from structured curriculum that is characterised by separating bodies of information to interdisciplinary curricula. The teaching of EMS is also characterised by integration over and above the plan of the department of basic education which has demanded teachers to employ integrated teaching (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Moreover, there are a numerous number of concerns that teachers are not adequately equipped to cope with demands, having been aware that they are qualified in specific discipline. It is a challenging thing that EMS in grade 7 is already an integrated subject. IR8 stated that:

*“The challenge at grade7 level is that the teachers at primary schools especially in the senior phase they are troubled with many subjects which need a good time each, as a result the focus on EMS gets diluted maybe they are qualified in English and Mathematics they will do well at it comes to the EMS they got to make that they have a teaching plan they have a work schedule in order to continue, but without going into further explanation and also explaining concepts*



*that need to be explained At high school level in grade 8 and 9 you find that workload is too big to contain for teachers but we find that at high school now because the teacher of commercial subjects at FET level for example teaching either Accounting ,Business Studies and Economics invariably that teacher is also teaching EMS”.*

**The statements from IR3 were:**

*“I would go back to the old system where the learner was studying Economics separately from Accounting, so that the learner will be able to focus. Also in that system there were three teachers and each teacher was able to specialise in his favourite subject. In the current system you will find a teacher focusing more on the business part and not giving a lot of attention to the economics part. So personally I would like it if we go back to separate subject rather than making a combination as it is happening, as I have already said that it was better for learners if they were separated than if they were put together because even if a learner is good in Accounting, but if he or she is taught by a teacher who is a specialist in Business Studies you find that the teacher doesn't focus more in Accounting”.*

The research has enabled the researchers to also understand and grasp what teachers struggle with when trying to achieve the stated objectives of EMS learning area. One would have thought that a larger percent would state that their knowledge of EMS integration is intact and up to standard. IR14 stated that:

*“The problem is the incorporation Accounting, Economics and Business Studies. Also the numbers of period that are allocated for EMS are very limited for a child to clearly understand what is going on more especially in Accounting”.*

The research also enabled the researchers to appreciate and respectfully acknowledge the fortitude demonstrated by the participants in their efforts of achieving the educational objectives of their educational institutions. There are individuals who do not see the long-lasting rewards that are derived from integration. The dissatisfaction with integration of EMS is clearly obvious in IR4's words which were:

*“I would go back to the old style of teaching where Accounting part was Accounting, meaning Accounting must have a full period like during our time we were learning Accounting as Accounting, Economics as Economics and Business Studies. They must not be mixed according to my side”.*

The research enabled the researchers to realize other factors that might impede what EMS teachers are trying to achieve with the learners. IR9 was said:

*“I think this thing of measuring these three subjects it becomes more of a problem because in most cases you will find that the EMS is given to someone who has not done accounting at all*

*and that person will only deal with the content part of it and forget about the calculations that are there in Accounting. So I think this combination is a problem”.*

The responses from IR9, IR13 and IR17 suggest that a strategy that will yield desirable results in Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) needs to be developed because individuals who are assigned to impart knowledge have identified setbacks that impede the achievement of the desired objectives. IR declared:

*“You know the time for Accounting should be more because now the learners have got a big problem when it comes to Accounting. If you can remember previously in our education Accounting was treated as a subject alone without incorporating with Business Study and Economic from grade 8. That is why now we have got a big high rate of fail in grade 12 because now the emphasis in grade 12 is limited due to the time and incorporation of Business Studies and Economics. It should be treated differently from the two or the two be incorporation be introduced in grade 8 and I would separate the Accounting, Business Studies and Economics so that learners are drilled on each subject independently”.*

**IR17 agreed by stating that:**

*“It has a lot of work together I think if it was divided into two sections for example in Social Science, Social Science is divided into two sections. We have History and Geography. So it is easy for learners to understand that now we are dealing with Geography section. So with EMS if it was divided into two sections Accounting on it’s on its own. Business Studies and Economics together, so I think that would be easier for the learners.*

**Leadership issues by HODs in the teaching of EMS**

In this study, it emerged that all Heads of Departments of primary schools who participated in this study have minimal qualifications in EMS, but this is overshadowed by immeasurable subject-related experience. This suggests that the support offered to teachers is derived from knowledge that has been accumulated through all the years of encountering various scenarios in the EMS learning space. The assistance offered by the Head of Department in the attainment of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) related objectives proved to be the instrument that induced the momentum that was previously lacking in the researchers-participants’ interactions. The level of assistance offered by Head of Department (HoD) at the research venue surpassed the expectations of the researchers. The support from Head of Departments (HoD) minimizes the subject-related hindrances and conflicts. The Head of Departments from the research site unequivocally stated their willingness to assist in reaching the desired research destination. The teaching of EMS in the Mandeni Ward is undoubtedly underpinned by enthusiastic and supportive Head of Departments, (HoD). The effective teaching of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). The researchers were keen to know the conditions of the

resources used in EMS teaching the information associated with the level of resources in teaching EMS.

### **Availability of teaching resources in EMS**

The availability of resources in the teaching of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) is identified through the enlightening words of IR13 which were:

*“Mainly we are using the textbook. You can’t inspire the learners because there are not enough resources it is a challenge”.*

EMS teaching resources are not diverse at the school. The lack of multiple EMS-related resources is evident in the words of IR4:

*“I don’t have all resources. Lack of modelling instruments we don’t have calculators and we are all relying on one textbook, because we do not have a functioning school library. In Ems there is a lot of work that needs research it is hard for learners to visits a public library because they then will complain about the unavailability of transport”.*

### **IR12 stated that**

*“One of the challenges is the lack of resources, lack of relevant resources”*

It is a challenge that teachers are facing and the learners of the educational resources and in the absence of the resources it becomes more difficult to enhance education in an effective way participants IR16 said

*“I will say the limited resources like textbooks. We know that the department is trying hard for one learner one book, but then we are not yet there. Until we are there we can say there are resources and I think EMS needs more resources than just textbooks, because sometimes we have to do practical activities. So I will say that limited resources are a factor when it comes to the teaching of EMS”.*

The challenges that are brought about the teaching resource in EMS are the things that the majority of the participants speak with one voice in different ways in support what other participants has advocated with mono voice. The draining of the morale and the restlessness about the insufficient resources can be extracted in the words of IR9:

*“Most of the challenges that we normally face is the lack of resources in my case if I can talk about my case because at the moment we don’t even have EMS textbook, I have got only one copy and there is no teacher’s guide. The teacher’s guide is not available only the sample I have just ordered the lack of resource, for example the books are not sufficient sometimes*



*learners are forced to share and sometimes if you give them homework it becomes difficult for them to do that homework because they are living in different places. So sharing a book is not easy”.*

One question that remained amongst the researchers when the analysis of the research was conducted was if the EMS pass rate would greatly improve if the EMS related aspects (textbooks, teaching aids, and classrooms) improved. This question was partly answered by IR11 who said:

*“About educational resources I won’t say much, what I can only say is that our school and its pupils are having a disadvantage when it comes to educational resources. That leads to poor achievement when it comes to learner’s results, because we take a lot of time writing on the chalkboard because of lack of better resources and that affects the learners on their performance”.*

Assan and Lumadi (2012) and Modise (2014) maintain that human beings employ all the senses during the learning process as a result a variety of resources must be used to facilitate teaching and learning. However, it emerged from the interviews conducted that there are not enough resources to be used in teaching EMS. This suggests that the amount of the resources necessary for EMS teaching is below the desirable level. None of the respondents regarded the resources for EMS teaching as adequate. IR17 stated:

*“We have insufficient resources where schools do not have enough resources to teach EMS”.*

Another interesting thing that emerged from this study was the attitudes respondents have towards the introduction of EMS in lower grades. One participant stated that the introduction of EMS in lower grades could be interpreted as one of the effective turn around strategies in the EMS field. The researchers also felt the need to visit the role played by parents or guardians in the learning of EMS.

### **Parents’ involvement**

It was the intention of the research to investigate the correlation between parent involvement and the attainment of desired EMS goals. Assan and Lumadi (2012) opine that research overwhelmingly demonstrates, that parent involvement in children’s learning is positively related to achievement. This research is a spring board that can help the researchers to contribute effectively in formulating a useful tool that will bring about desirable change in the EMS learning environment. The parent plays a pivotal role in the educational success of his or her child. Schreuder (2009) and Modise (2014) opine that parental involvement in the educational activities of the child yields outstanding results.

IR3 stated:

*“From I am working the negligence of parent is very they not come to the school meetings they do not assist learners and they do not care when called to the meeting not even a quarter comes even some parent do not know what grade a child is doing”*

Mashiapata (2006), Maistry (2006) as well as Schreuder (2009) cautioned about everlasting effects of parental involvement in the learning of their children. The more intensively parents are involved in their children’s learning the more beneficial are achievements effects (Schreuder, 2009; and Assan & Lumadi, 2012.). Parent or guardian involvement of all types yields desirable results in the child’s educational endeavours. The research figures that indicate the involvement of parents in their children’s educational attempts is 57%. 43% stated that they are not involved in their children’s educational activities. The idea discussed in the above lines is clearly evident when IR16 stated that:

*“The lack of parental involvement in their children’s education because parents lack interest in the business ventures, they then turn a blind eye if they are to assist the learners with the EMS projects”.*

Modise (2014) cautioned that parents or guardians who are not involved in their children’s educational activities are suppressing the educational progress of their children. Assan and Lumadi (2012) state that if parents receive phone calls, read and sign written communication from the school and perhaps attend and listen during parents- teacher conferences, greater achievements benefits accrue that would be the case with no parent involvement at all. One of the goals of the participants in the improvement of EMS teaching and learning should be actively involve parents in the learning of their children. One participant, IR17 stated:

*“Is the background where parents are not used to EMS terms”*

It was from the views of the EMS HoDs that majority of the EMS related challenges would be a thing of the past if parents genuinely involve themselves in the learning of their children. When parents check the homework, monitor the academic progress, maintain an open communication lines with the teacher and also make it a point to be visible at school the responsibilities of the teacher become manageable and attainable. Modise (2014) maintains that parent or guardian involvement positively impact attitudes towards school, and subject areas, self-concept, classroom behaviour, expectations for one’s future, absenteeism, motivation and retention. Modise (2014) states that the lack of parental or guardian care has been mentioned by EMS teachers as a challenge because of the absence of individuals who will commit to the EMS educational progress of a learner confronted by demanding EMS schoolwork. IR 16 affirmed the words of Modise (2014) by saying:

*“The major challenges from where I work parents are unable to help learners with EMS related work since parents are saying they know nothing about EMS since it is new learning area”*

The words of well experienced HoD clarified that:

*“The level of parent involvement in the school work might vary considerably. There are parents who check if the learner has successfully completed the homework, maintain communication lines with teachers, ask questions to verify information spoken by the learner and also lend valuable support to the efforts of the educational institution”.*

The responses of the participants revealed that only a minority of the parents play a vital role in the child’s learning. The analysing of the research data gradually reveals the elements that contribute to the failure of the desired EMS goals in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. The system (parents, teachers, learners school authorities and educational authorities) seem to be disintegrated because the parents seem not to be pulling their fair share of their responsibilities. Teachers need to have their efforts supplemented by reliable and dependable parent involvement. One can extract the stumbling block that prevents parent participation in the words of IR2 when the respondent stated:

*“As in my case parent do love to be involved but the challenge with EMS is that it touches on the information parents are not familiar with. The content in EMS is new and parents are not familiar with it”*

Modise (2014) maintains that it is important for the school administrators and parents to be aware that parent involvement supports student learning, behaviour and attitudes regardless of factors such as parent’s income, educational level and whether or not parents are employed. There are countless benefits for school system (School Governing Body, learner, teachers, ward managers and parents etc.) and when parents become involved in their children’s learning.

### **Discussion of findings**

Some schools have been compelled by circumstances such as: lack of teachers and curriculum requirements, to hire any teacher available to teach Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). In one of the research sites, it was found that the HoD was not qualified in the field of Economics, Accounting or Business Studies. In the same school, the teacher who was tasked to teach EMS was also not qualified in the field. These situations suggest that the teaching and learning of EMS in particular school have been compromised, and it is likely to have negative effects on learner performance, and learner understanding of EMS.

This study corroborates the findings of Rampa (2010) which showed that the shortage of adequately qualified teachers in the teaching of EMS has been a dominant discourse. Sometimes, the review of teachers’ work load will enable a teacher with only the basics of

EMS skills to be allocated an EMS session in a particular classroom. Evidence in the study suggests that in some schools, when there is a shortage of EMS teachers, the School Management Team would review the all the school's teachers' academic records and statements of results to find any teacher that may have done one, or more, of these areas in their studies. Based on that finding, a teacher will be allocated EMS as a subject to teach. This urgency to fill the EMS learning space with a teacher does not consider the nature of Economic and Management Sciences, which requires a teacher who is highly trained, since Economic and Management Science (EMS) is a three-layered subject, which requires a fully qualified and skilled teacher.

This research discovered that not all teachers who are currently teaching EMS were trained. In other schools, teachers were never trained to teach any commercial subject, of which Economic and Management Science is the foundation of, and some teachers only had a limited exposure to EMS at university level. The limited exposure at university level does not enable teachers who are not adequately trained and qualified to fully comprehend the knowledge of the three layers of Economic and Management Science, which is Accounting, Economics and Business Studies. The shortage of qualified EMS teachers is a factor that mitigates effective teaching and learning of the subject and this is further compounded by the following factors: Effective teaching and learning of EMS has to draw on a range of philosophies of education, one of which is the theory of performance, and approaches of teaching and learning, as well as appropriate linking in theory practice, and also the adoption of a process model. The process model was included in this study because of its lessons that positively influence EMS learning.

This study found out a great proportion of EMS teachers is ill-equipped to teach EMS effectively. The study identified teachers who are university graduates, who failed to secure jobs in their area of training, and as a result joined the teaching profession from necessity rather than choice. Another dimension is of teachers who were trained to teach certain subjects but were assigned to teach EMS. This study reveals that most of these teachers lack the mathematical skills to teach EMS well (EMS needs strong language and mathematical skills). Maistry (2006) posited that the language used in EMS is challenging, but demands a lot mathematical ability, of which the majority of EMS teachers lack. As a consequence, it needs a teacher who is well grounded in these facets of EMS subject.

The nature of Economic and Management Science (EMS) which is three layered subjects negatively impact on the teaching of EMS because some teachers were not educationally trained for a learning area that came to existence after the completion of their educational training (Schreuder, 2009). This study discovered that some EMS teachers felt compelled to reveal their academic deficiency in Accounting, Economics and Business Studies as well as their lack of sound background in Accounting, Economics and Business studies also negatively impacted the willingness towards teaching EMS. EMS is the combination of three disciplines because some teachers were not trained to be specialist for Accounting but would be compelled to teach Accounting in the GET phase in EMS where Accounting is taught at the foundation

level (GET phase). It is important to state that the research participants did mention that the nature of Economic and Management Science (EMS) present a challenge because it requires a clear understanding of the essential parts of the Economic and Management Science (EMS) structure.

Teaching Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) requires a diverse range of classroom management skills, the ability to anticipate various types of questions stemming from the learner's curious and attentive minds and also the willingness to update one's business knowledge. The rationalism theory posits that teaching of EMS also calls for up to date information on recent economic events taking place in the world stage. Some learners have access to up to date business information because of the prevalent technological advancement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Economic and Management Science (EMS) requires that a teacher's mind –set be willing to go beyond the prescribed textbooks because of the ever-changing business environment. The Economic and Management (EMS) demands that the teacher gradually attempts to make the learners appreciate the results that accompany the mastery of EMS.

### **Exposure to EMS subjects in high school**

Throughout the compiling of the research, the researchers were keen to visit the issue of the teacher's high school and university educational background. This study reveals that there are teachers whose post high school educational training exposed and also equipped them with the relevant EMS knowledge and skills. The educational investigation that the researchers conducted found 32% of the teachers do not have a commercial high school background. The lack of exposure to commercial subjects in post high school educational training can be associated with the underperformance of learners. The research also reveals, that even in Business Studies, not all teachers took Business Studies in their schooling. It is a clear indication that even if EMS teachers are trained, they are not fully equipped, and as a result they lack any confidence to teach EMS. The researchers also investigated the times allocated for EMS and EMS workshops.

### **Time allocated for Economic and Management Science (EMS) and EMS workshops**

This research revealed that Economic and Management Science (EMS) teachers complained about the two class periods of 45 minutes each, in a week, that is allocated for Economic and Management Science(EMS). This is the only contact time that teachers spend with learners in class.

Further, one sentiment that emerged from the research activity was related to EMS teachers workshop attendance. Teachers stated that the time allocated to workshops was insufficient because they could not possibly attend to the many EMS related questions from the teachers, and also provide any reliable and timely educational support that is urgently needed in the Economic and Management Science learning space.



The frequency of the workshops (though the frequency may have good intentions) sometimes becomes problematic, as these take place during teaching time and further reduce contact time between the teachers and the learners. It is sometimes difficult for EMS teachers to utilize the little time they have in teaching EMS because of the frequency of EMS workshops that they need to attend outside school. As Modise (2014) also claims, it is a challenge in which EMS teachers find themselves choosing whether to teach or to attend the workshops.

### **Teachers insight of EMS integrations**

The other factor that the researchers looked at is the knowledge of teachers when it comes to integration in EMS. The nature of EMS itself is formulated through integration of which requires the teacher who will be able to integrate the three subjects, namely Accounting, Business Studies and Economics. The EMS teachers that were interviewed during the study emphasis this challenge in the GET phase. Integration is intertwined in EMS and some participants find it challenging to implement something that they were scantily trained for. Ref. Modise (2014) posits that EMS teachers are challenged since there are things which they themselves not fully understand. They teach it because it is in the book and they struggle to integrate the knowledge in EMS with other subjects (Rampa, 2010).

### **The attitudes of teachers in EMS**

The beneficiaries of confident and well-informed teacher are the learners who in turn will use the knowledge to make a long-lasting contribution to society. The researchers also investigated the manner in which the teacher embraces EMS, made up of Accounting, Business Studies and Economics. The researchers asked the question to EMS teachers if the implementation of EMS in the GET phase was a wise decision. This study revealed that, when it comes to accounting, over 36% of the EMS teachers sampled say that “they do not enjoy Accounting”, and that it is a challenge. If a teacher is not enjoying the Accounting part, it means that the teacher will not be comfortable teaching the Accounting part. As Modise (2014) expounds, EMS teachers do not enjoy teaching certain components of the subject which ultimately lead to them not to be comfortable and teach with less confidence. This lack of confidence is seen by respondents as a factor that influences learners’ performance in EMS in the GET senior phase. When the researchers asked the EMS teachers about how comfortable they are when it comes to teaching EMS, 70% of the teachers clearly state that they are not comfortable. In some sections they teach it because it is written in a book, but they have no confidence to teach.

### **The role of the Head of Departments in the teaching of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)**

A piece of information that should linger in the reader’s mind is that the Head of Departments (HoD) at schools were also relevant respondents in the study. Through the research related interaction, I found that in some schools, the HoDs play a minimal role in the attainment of the

EMS related objectives. Modise (2014) states that EMS teachers lack support from HoDs in the GET senior phase. It is in this phase that HoDs are responsible for subjects in which they are not knowledgeable. My interaction with EMS teachers also discovered their uncertainty about the reliable educational support they receive from a HoD who is not well acquainted with the intricacies of the GET senior phase EMS. The HoDs rendered support, to relevant subordinates, based on the leader's experience and level of understanding. The outcry of EMS teachers was that HoDs were never exposed to commercial subjects, and so it becomes very difficult for them to assist with something themselves really need to be assisted. EMS teachers are less willing to teach a subject which the HoD cannot fully assist them when assistance is required. Conducting research helped the researchers to realize that there is a link between the teacher's morale and the level of support given by someone in an influential position, for example the HoD in a particular school department. The teacher morale becomes damped when he or she cannot have his or her expectation met. The role of any HoD is to provide support, resolve any class related challenge and also provide guidance when the teacher encounters a problem.

### **Availability of resources in the teaching of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)**

The availability, or the lack, of EMS related resources can be clearly understood if one pays attention to the research data. The research data explicitly indicates that 58% of the respondents are not satisfied with current available EMS related resources. A handful of the participants (34%) rated the resources as poor. A small percentage of the participants (8%) rated the EMS-related resources as good. One of the concerns of the EMS teacher is that a textbook alone cannot have inspirational effects on the learner who aspires to do well in EMS. The absence of any modelling instruments is something that EMS teacher are concerned about because of their useful potential in helping the learners grasp the knowledge discussed in the EMS learning space. The absence of sufficient EMS resources is something that research participants are greatly concerned about. The educational objectives of the EMS classroom are not adequately attained if an instrument that is supposed to supplement the literature is unavailable.

### **Supporting the introduction of Economic and Management Science (EMS) in lower grades**

The interaction with the research participants brought to surface the desire to see EMS being introduced in the foundation phase. The research participants were of the view that an early introduction of EMS in the lower grades would yield desirable results in the later educational stages of learner. The proposal to introduce EMS in the lower grade was supported by at least 53% of the participants, but 47% of the research participant did not fully embrace the idea of introducing EMS in the lower grades.

The researchers while investigating the factors that influence the learner performance in EMS came across verbal hints that suggested the introduction of Economic and Management Science



(EMS) in earlier grade or in lower grade. Teachers even raise the opinions that the subject that are done as independent subject in the FET band actual start from foundation phase but with Economic and Management Science(EMS) it is not like that. Some teachers had a belief that the earlier introduction of EMS in the lower grades would yield desirable outcomes. The analysis of the research results show that 47% of the participants and 53% stated that they would support enthusiastically if really these teachers are of the idea that Economic and Management Science (EMS) is introduced at lower grade.

### **Lack of parental involvement understanding**

Rampa (2010) states that the more the parents are involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial the achievement effects would be. Other research findings demonstrated that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement (Assan & Lumadi, 2012).

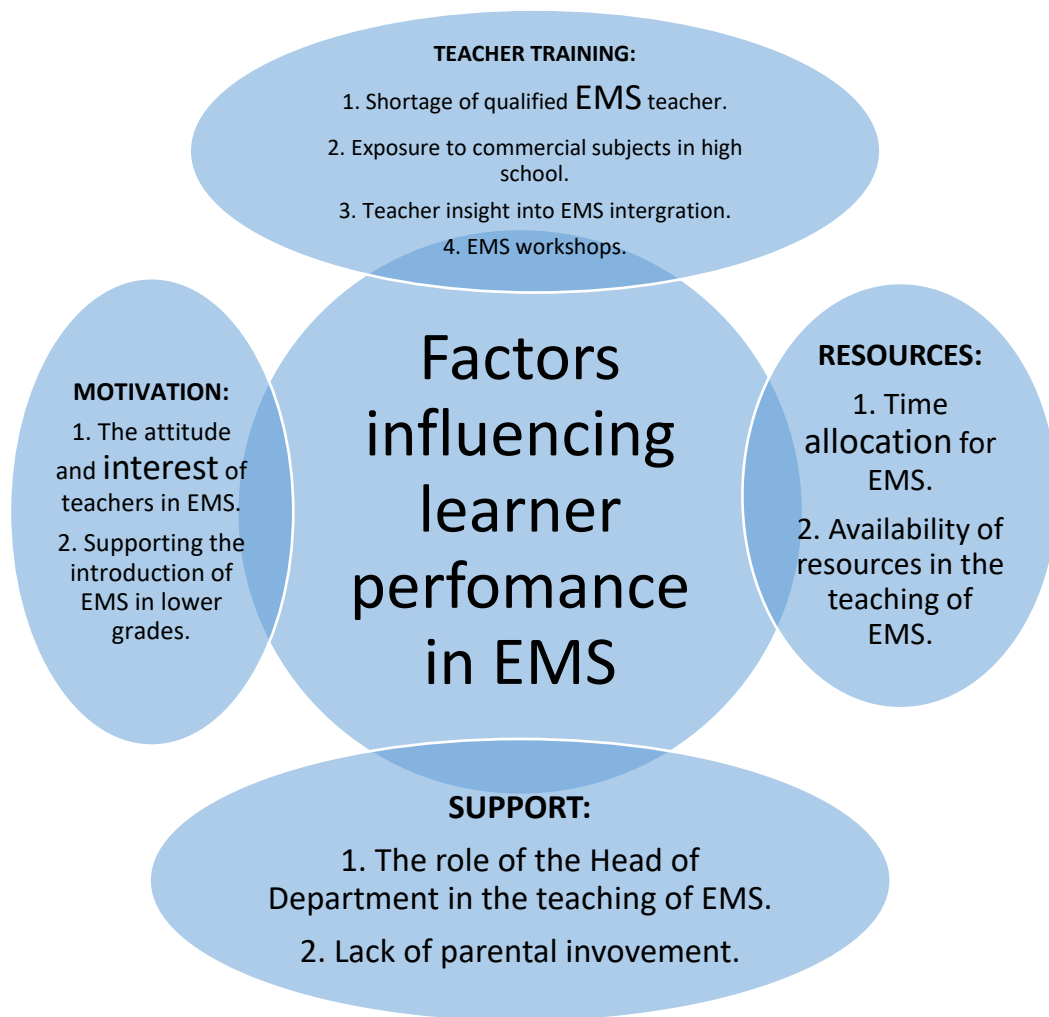
### **Conclusion**

The study explored factors influencing learner performance in Economic and Management Sciences, using selected secondary schools in rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the factors contributing to the persistent poor Performance of Learners in Economic and Management Sciences in the selected senior secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa include amongst others: shortage of qualified teachers, time allocated to the teaching of the subject, as well as time allocated for workshops for training teachers.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations that are presented in this sub-section of the thesis have been summarized and conceptualized into a model as shown in Figure 1. This model seeks to highlight the relationship and the link of numerous factors that influence learner performance in the subject of EMS.

**Figure 1: The model of factors influencing learner performance in EMS**



### EMS teacher training

School should use the teachers with the most experience in the EMS field as mentors to newly qualified teachers. Individuals who have been in the field longer can offer useful insights, help and support. Newly qualified teachers need mentors of people who have been in the educational environment long enough to know successful teaching practices, and who may offer curriculum guidance.

The training of teachers must be prioritized, it has to be continuous (Continuing Professional Teachers Development - CPTD), and the focus should not be on novice teachers only, but on all teachers. Thorough continuous training and workshops will eliminate confusion. The EMS curriculum policy facilitators should ensure that they come with subject material that is user friendly so that the user is keen to use the material. The material that puzzles and confuses the teacher does not contribute to excellent academic performance.



### **Provision of resources**

A number of respondents indicated that the lack of the resources is a factor that negatively influences learner performance both from the side of the learner and the teacher. Particularly the basic resources such as textbooks are prerequisite for teaching in the GET phase to lay firm foundation. The Department of Education has the primary responsibility to ensure that the schools have adequate textbooks and other helpful resources that will enable the teachers and learners to master EMS better and effectively. The other life-changing resources that can positively influence the EMS learning space are business newspapers, the magazines with trade index, the publications that displays market shares and also the printouts from internet that contain relevant business information.

### **Review of the EMS curriculum policy**

Constant review of the EMS policy is necessary at both school level and by the Department of Education, in order to evaluate the extent to which policies and procedures are being adhered to, and to ascertain whether developmental programs are identified for individual teachers, and whether schools are following through and achieving their intended objectives.



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