

**THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF EDUCATORS IN SHAPING THE CURRICULUM: A CASE  
STUDY OF MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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DATE: 07 NOVEMBER 2024

## DECLARATION

I, **KATRINAH NOHLALI SKOSANA (Student no: 58321373)**, do hereby declare that **The pivotal role of educators in shaping the curriculum in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa** is the result of my investigation and research and that this has not been submitted in part or full for any degree or for any other degree to any other University.

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## DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR

I, Prof Mpho-Entle Puleng Modise, declare that the thesis has been submitted to Turnitin – the originality checking software (Annexure 6).

This dissertation was submitted with my approval.



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Prof Mpho-Entle Puleng Modise

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is first dedicated to the one above (God) who made it possible for me to reach this far. He has been my source, provider, and pillar of strength. Secondly, I would like to dedicate this work to my late parents JOSEPH DAVID SKOSANA and SESI BETTY SKOSANA who raised a strong woman who understands that in life you must work hard for everything you want. Not to forget my supervisor, PROFESSOR MPHO-ENTLE PULENG MODISE who was my guiding light upon my completion of this dissertation. She has been a great help and of great wisdom upon this journey. May God bless her. And lastly, I want to thank my siblings, who are my two sisters (FLORENCE SIYAPHI SKOSANA and PHUMZILE MARENTIA MAHLANGU) who always supported me and gave me advice not to give up.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the pivotal role of teachers in the development of the curriculum in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. It highlights the challenges teachers face in aligning national curriculum policies with local classroom realities, aiming to understand teacher involvement in curriculum development. A case study strategy was used, focusing on four schools in Mpumalanga. The research employed semi-structured interviews involving teachers, Heads of Departments (HODs), principals, a circuit representative, and a provincial representative. This was complemented with the literature review that provided an analysis of existing research on curriculum development and the role of teachers in developing and developed countries.

Data was analysed using thematic analysis, revealing that, although participants acknowledge the importance of teachers' involvement in curriculum development, their participation is limited to none, due to bureaucratic constraints, insufficient professional development, and lack of resources. Taba's Curriculum Development Model was used to better understand how teachers can effectively contribute to the process. Taba's model advocate for a bottom-up approach, stressing the significance of teachers' classroom experiences in creating effective curricula. The model helped identify gaps on teacher involvement in rural areas like Mpumalanga Province in South Africa.

The study's key findings consolidated the outcomes of the research, providing a cohesive understanding of teachers' roles in curriculum development and offering practical solutions for improving their involvement. Empirical findings revealed that teachers in Siyabuswa Circuit of Mpumalanga Province experience limited involvement in curriculum development due to hierarchical barriers and insufficient support. Findings further included the disconnect between policy intentions and classroom realities, lack of professional development, and resource limitations. The study confirmed Taba's Curriculum Development Model, advocating for active teacher participation, but highlighted that teachers were often excluded due to hierarchical barriers.

The study concluded that systemic barriers continued to restrict teacher involvement in curriculum development, emphasising the need for targeted reforms.

Recommendations included enhancing professional development programs, increasing institutional flexibility, and providing adequate resources to support teachers in curriculum design. The study also suggests directions for future research, including examining regional differences in curriculum development. These measures aimed to bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that teachers could play a central role in shaping effective curricula that address learner needs.

**Keywords:** curriculum adaptation, curriculum development, curriculum implementation, education policy, professional development, stakeholder engagement, teacher professional development, teacher involvement, Taba's curriculum theory

## ZULU ABSTRACT

Lolu cwaningo luphenye ngeqhaza elibalulekile lothisha ekuthuthukiseni kukharikhulamu esifundazweni saseMpumalanga, eNingizimu Africa. Iqamisa izinselelo othisha ababhekana nazo ekuhlanganiseni izinqubomgomo zekharikhulamu kazwelonke namaqiniso asendaweni yasekilasini, okuhloswe ngayo ukuqonda ukuzibandakanya kothisha ekuthuthukisweni kwekharikhulamu. Ukubuyekezwa kwemibhalo kunikeza ukuhlaziywa kocwaningo olukhona mayelana nokuthuthukiswa kwekharikhulamu kanye neqhaza lothisha emazweni asathuthuka nathuthukile. Kusetshenziswe isu lokufunda ngendaba, eligxile ezikoleni ezine zaseMpumalanga. Lolu cwaningo lusebenzise izinhlokhono ezingahlelekile ezibandakanya othisha, iziNhloko zeMinyango (ama-HOD), othishanhloko, omele isekethe kanye nomele isifundazwe. Idatha yahlaziywa kusetshenziswa ukuhlaziya okuyindikimba, kwembula ukuthi, nakuba ababambiqhaza bevuma ukubaluleka kokuzibandakanya kothisha ekuthuthukisweni kwekharikhulamu, ukubamba kwabo iqhaza kulinganiselwe ngenxa yezingqinamba zokuphatha, ukuthuthukiswa okunganele kochwepheshe, kanye nokuntuleka kwezinsiza.

Imodeli kaTaba Yokuthuthukiswa Kwekharikhulamu yasetshenziswa ukuze kuqondwe kangcono ukuthi othisha bangaba negalelo kanjani kule nqubo. Imodeli kaTaba yayikhuthaza indlela ebheke phansi, igcizelela ukubaluleka kokuhlangenwe nakho kothisha ekilasini ekwakheni ikharikhulamu ephumelelayo. Lo mfanekiso usize ekuboneni izikhala emibhalweni, ikakhulukazi ukuntuleka kocwaningo ngokubandakanyeka kothisha ezindaweni zasemakhaya njengeMpumalanga. Okutholwe okubalulekile kwalolu cwaningo kuhlanganise imiphumela yocwaningo, kunikeze ukuqonda okuhlangene kweqhaza lothisha ekuthuthukisweni kwekharikhulamu nokunikeza izixazululo ezisebenzayo zokuthuthukisa ukuzibandakanya kwabo. Okutholwe ngokuqina kwembula ukuthi othisha baseSifundazweni saseSiyabuswa esiFundazweni saseMpumalanga babamba iqhaza elincanyana ekuthuthukisweni kohlelo lwezifundo ngenxa yezithiyo zohlelo nokwesekwa okwanele. Okutholakele kuphinde kwahlanganisa nokunqanyulwa phakathi kwezinhloso zenqubomgomo namaqiniso ekilasini, ukuntuleka kokuthuthukiswa kochwepheshe, kanye nemikhawulo yezinsiza.



Lolu cwaningo luqinisekisile i-Curriculum Development Model kaTaba, ekhuthaza ukuhlanganyela kothisha ngenkuthalo, kodwa yagqamisa ukuthi othisha bavamise ukukhishwa inyumbazane ngenxa yemingcele yezigaba. Ucwaningo luphethe ngokuthi izithiyo zesistimu ziyaqhubeka nokukhawulela ukuzibandakanya kothisha ekuthuthukisweni kwekharikhulamu, kugcizelela isidingo sezinguquko ezihlosiwe. Izincomo zazihlanganisa ukuthuthukisa izinhlelo zokuthuthukiswa kochwepheshe, ukwandisa ukuguquguquka kwesikhungo, kanye nokuhlinzeka ngezinsiza ezanele zokusekela othisha ekwakhweni kwekharikhulamu. Ucwaningo luphinde luphakamise izikhombisi-ndlela zocwaningo lwangomuso, okuhlanganisa nokuhlola umehluko wesifunda ekuthuthukisweni kwekharikhulamu. Lezi zinyathelo bezihlose ukuvala igebe phakathi kwenqubomgomo nokusebenza, ukuqinisekisa ukuthi othisha bangaba neqhaza elikhulu ekubumbeni izifundo ezisebenza ngempumelelo ezibhekana nezidingo zabafundi.

## **AFRIKAANS ABSTRACT**

Hierdie studie het die deurslaggewende rol van onderwysers in die ontwikkeling van die kurrikulum in Mpumalanga Provinsie, Suid-Afrika, ondersoek. Dit beklemtoon die uitdagings wat onderwysers in die gesig steur om nasionale kurrikulumbeleid in lyn te bring met plaaslike klaskamerrealiteite, met die doel om onderwysers se betrokkenheid by kurrikulumontwikkeling te verstaan. Die literatuuroorsig verskaf 'n ontleding van bestaande navorsing oor kurrikulumontwikkeling en die rol van onderwysers in ontwikkelende en ontwikkelde lande. 'n Gevallestudiestrategie is gebruik, met die fokus op vier skole in Mpumalanga.

Die navorsing het semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude gebruik wat onderwysers, departementshoofde (HOD's), skoolhoofde, 'n kringvertegenwoordiger en 'n provinsiale verteenwoordiger betrek het. Data is ontleed met behulp van tematiese analise, wat aan die lig gebring het dat, alhoewel deelnemers die belangrikheid van onderwysers se betrokkenheid by kurrikulumontwikkeling erken, hul deelname beperk is as gevolg van burokratiese beperkings, onvoldoende professionele ontwikkeling en gebrek aan hulpbronne. Taba se Kurrikulumontwikkelingsmodel is gebruik om beter te verstaan hoe onderwysers effektief tot die proses kan bydra. Taba se model het gepleit vir 'n onder-na-bo-benadering, wat die belangrikheid van onderwysers se klaskamerervarings in die skep van effektiewe kurrikulums beklemtoon.

Die model het gehelp om leemtes in die literatuur te identifiseer, veral die gebrek aan navorsing oor onderwyserbetrokkenheid in landelike gebiede soos Mpumalanga. Die studie se sleutelbevindinge het die uitkomst van die navorsing gekonsolideer, wat 'n samehangende begrip van onderwysers se rolle in kurrikulumontwikkeling verskaf het en praktiese oplossings bied om hul betrokkenheid te verbeter. Empiriese bevindinge het aan die lig gebring dat onderwysers in die Siyabuswa-distrik van Mpumalanga-provinsie beperkte betrokkenheid by kurrikulumontwikkeling ervaar as gevolg van hiërargiese hindernisse en onvoldoende ondersteuning. Bevindinge het verder die ontkoppeling tussen beleidsvoornemens en klaskamerrealiteite, gebrek aan professionele ontwikkeling en hulpbronbeperkings ingesluit.

Die studie het Taba se kurrikulumontwikkelingsmodel bevestig, wat vir aktiewe onderwyserdeelname gepleit het, maar het beklemtoon dat onderwysers dikwels

uitgesluit is weens hiërargiese hindernisse. Die studie het tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat sistemiese struikelblokke voortgaan om onderwysers se betrokkenheid by kurrikulumontwikkeling te beperk, wat die behoefte aan geteikende hervormings beklemtoon. Aanbevelings sluit in die verbetering van professionele ontwikkelingsprogramme, die verhoging van institusionele buigsaamheid en die verskaffing van voldoende hulpbronne om onderwysers in kurrikulumontwerp te ondersteun. Die studie stel ook rigtings vir toekomstige navorsing voor, insluitend die ondersoek van streeksverskille in kurrikulumontwikkeling. Hierdie maatreëls het ten doel gehad om die gaping tussen beleid en praktyk te oorbrug, om te verseker dat onderwysers 'n sentrale rol kan speel in die vorming van effektiewe kurrikulums wat leerderbehoefte aanspreek.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTPD	Continuing Teacher Professional Development



DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FET	Further Education and Training
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
MS Teams	Microsoft Teams
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Professional Learning Community
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SA	South Africa
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGB	School Governing Body
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

In the pursuit of quality education, the role of teachers extends far beyond the confines of classroom instruction. Teachers are pivotal in shaping the curriculum to meet the diverse and evolving needs of their learners and communities. The implementation of curriculum reforms often reveals a gap between national policy intentions and the realities of local classrooms, which is characterised by its cultural diversity, linguistic variation, and socio-economic disparities (Magagula, 2022).

Alvior (2014) defines curriculum development as “a planned, a purposeful, progressive and systematic process to create a positive improvement in the education system”. Curricula govern educational systems, which define subject content for each unit of study; hence, curriculum development can be viewed as the operational systems of educational institutions (Tyler & Richards, 2018). Curriculum development can be challenging; therefore, the participation of all stakeholders, especially individuals directly involved in student instruction, is vital in successful curriculum development and revision. For curriculum development to be effective and schools to be successful, teachers must be involved in the development process of the curriculum. As practitioners and implementers of the curriculum, teachers provide valuable insight and information into curriculum development processes.

According to Fullan (2014), “the degree of teacher involvement that is the foundation of curriculum development, determines the success of educational reform and a school curriculum”. However, according to recent studies (Maepa, 2017; Mbatha, 2016), teachers still face persistent implementation difficulties in school. Teachers have not historically had a say in curriculum development, despite their central place within the education process, and their positions, difficulties, individual capacities and perspectives are frequently overlooked in South Africa and other countries (Ramberg, 2014). Similarly, other researchers suggests that reformers have preferred to alter teachers rather than include them in the process (Park & Sung, 2013; Carl, 2017; Avalos, 2011). Notwithstanding comprehensive study on countrywide curriculum change, there is still little knowledge of how South African teachers were assisted in adjusting to curriculum change.

Without the involvement of teachers in the curriculum development, answers to these and other questions about the role of teachers in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa cannot be addressed. The quality and amount of professional development they receive from their schools and the Department of Basic Education also need to be evaluated to assess impact. This study aimed to explore the multifaceted role teachers play in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa, highlighting their innovative approaches and practices or perhaps lack thereof.

## **1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Educational change has been a topic of discussion not only in South Africa but around the world for many years (Abud & Mensah, 2016; Mulenga & Luangala, 2015; Kobiah, 2016). In his article *“Large scale reform comes of age”*, Fullan (2009) notes major educational changes from 2003 to 2009, focusing on curriculum development in Finland, Singapore, Canada, Hong Kong, and South Korea. In South Africa, the post 1994 era saw a processor transformation in all aspects of society and education was no exception. Since democratisation in 1994, South Africa’s school curriculum has undergone a fundamental change. Almost 20 years since it was democratised, the Ministry of Education introduced three national curriculum revisions for schools, i.e., National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education, 2009).

Magumbo (2022) explored the opportunities and challenges faced by school leadership in implementing the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in Gauteng Province in South Africa. Despite the critical role that teachers play in this process, there is a paucity of research focusing on their contributions to curriculum development within the Mpumalanga Province, given the rurality of this province. Most studies emphasise broad policy implementation without delving into the nuanced role of teachers in shaping educational content at the local level. This oversight limits our understanding of how local factors such as resource availability and cultural diversity influence curriculum development and how teachers navigate this challenge. Understanding the ways in which teachers engage with and influence the curriculum is crucial for developing more effective educational policies and practices that align with the needs of both teachers and learners.

Mpumalanga Province, with its blend of urban and rural settings, presents unique challenges that demand a tailored approach to curriculum development. Teachers in this province face the intricate task of balancing national educational standards with the specific needs of their learners, adapting teaching strategies to accommodate varied learning styles, languages, and cultural backgrounds (Magagula, 2022). This requires them to be not only implementers of curriculum but also active contributors to its development, ensuring that the curriculum is both relevant and effective in addressing the educational aspirations of their communities (Moore et al., 2023).

However, during her fourth-year teaching practice in 2019, the researcher noticed at the time how teachers were always doing administrative work for the subjects that they were teaching. This took too much of their time instead of being in the classroom implementing the curriculum. The researcher is currently employed as a teacher at a high school in the Mpumalanga Province. She observed how important it is that teachers be involved in the curriculum development since they implement it. She believed that involving teachers will allow them to identify the needs of the learners which can greatly improve learner performance in the province.

Teachers face tremendous challenges in the education system as role players due to educational reform movements and yet they are an important cornerstone in the planning and development of school curricula. In South Africa, disputes surrounding education restructuring have posed a challenge to diverse groups of educationists; states such as Nigeria, the USA, Botswana, Kenya, and Namibia are not immune (Blignaut & Au, 2014; Kobiah, 2016). In Ghana, Abud and Mensah (2016: 28) identified a few obstacles such as substantial workloads that prevent teachers from contributing to creating curricula. According to Mulenga and Laungela's (2015) research, "the significant role that teachers play in implementing the curriculum is essential for helping learners acquire knowledge, skills, integrity, and good behaviour." Therefore, all participants affected by the existing syllabus must be involved for the curriculum growth to remain successful (Ahmed, 2018; Mulenga & Lubasi, 2019). In order to meet society's needs and maintain high standards of education for a nation, teachers' involvement in the curriculum development process is essential.

The standard of education is failing to improve despite the changed curriculum (Monyane & Selesho, 2012). According to the OECD's (2018) report, "the common challenge of curriculum changes identified worldwide is that schools are dealing with the workload of the curriculum and curriculum reforms are lagging behind the recognition, poor decision making, implementation and impact." Although teachers are the ones who implement the curriculum, the forefront of curriculum development does not include them. As a result, teachers encounter situations where they are challenged by the same curriculum and are left to develop the learning environment and assessment independently (Mulenga, 2015). This research explored the critical role of teacher involvement in curriculum development in South Africa, Mpumalanga Province, and how this impacts learner performance.

### **1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

As indicated in the literature in the previous sections, the significant role of teachers' involvement in the curriculum development is still uncertain in South Africa. According to Aktan (2018: 398), "this problem also caused the curriculum not to match the needs and interests of the schools and learners." Even on the decisions to provide Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) as the favoured syllabus approach for a curriculum, no teachers were called to be involved in the decision but were called in for the elaboration and implementation process (Aktan, 2018). Teachers who are aware of the gaps and shortcomings in the implementation of teaching in the classroom should be highly involved in curriculum development (Alsubaie, 2016). Historically, curriculum development resulted in syllabi revision by administrative specialists without considering the views and involvement of practitioners, that is, teachers (Guthrie, 2012). For example, in South Africa the new curriculum which commenced in 2005 but was implemented in phases from the beginning of 1998 had no role for teachers' contribution to the curriculum development (Department of Education, 2009). However, these frequent changes caused challenges still faced by the teachers in schools today.

Despite the South African government's focus on education for national development, learners still face performance challenges, partly due to curriculum issues (Eyitayo, 2021). Reforms like the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) aim to standardise and

improve education. However, in Mpumalanga Province, there's a disconnect between these national policies and the realities teachers face. There's limited understanding of how teachers adapt these curricula to address socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic challenges.

The teachers' involvement in the curriculum development process is essential in meeting the needs of society. Teachers should be involved in curriculum development. Ng (2009) revealed that Hong Kong schools implemented a hierarchical structure in curriculum development. In 2003, Ireland introduced the revised Junior Cycle Physical Education (JCPE) that used a centralised approach; teachers were not consulted in the curriculum development process (Tong, 2010). Many nations, including South Africa, have adopted the centralised model since experts think they have the knowledge to establish, develop, and implement relevant and objective curricula. The challenge is backward thinking as the resulting curriculum must be implemented by the teachers. It is crucial to not only involve teachers in the development process but also to secure their full commitment. This way the team approach has more benefits than the top-down approach that has seen many attempts at developing the country's curricula fail. This research explored the impact of involving the teachers in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

### **1.3.1. Main Research Question**

The primary research question guiding this study was: "What is the role of teachers in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province?"

### **1.3.2. Research Questions**

The following secondary research questions helped in thoroughly unpacking the primary research question:

- How can teachers participate in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province?
- What are the implications of teacher involvement in Mpumalanga Province's curriculum development?
- What are the recommendations for effective teachers' participation in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province?

## **1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the study was to explore the important role of teachers in the curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province.

### ***Research Objectives***

This study explored the following objectives:

- To explore how teachers can participate in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province.
- To determine the implications of teacher involvement in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province.
- To provide recommendations for effective teacher participation in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province.

## **1.5 KEY CONCEPTS**

The research used the following key terms:

### ***Curriculum***

The definition of curriculum is a series of deliberately added learning activities (Mkandawire, 2010). For the purpose of this study, this definition was accepted as addressing important aspects of curriculum, that is learning activities.

### ***Curriculum Development***

Stenhouse (2012) defines curriculum development as “a socially constructed process”. Robin (2013) also argues that curriculum development is creating a positive improvement in the educational system through a purposeful planned, progressive, and systematic process. Robin (2013) definition was used in this study.

### ***Teachers***

A teacher (in some context an educator) is an individual who assists learners to learn, aptitude, or excellence (Alsubaie, 2016: 106). The study used the terms ‘teachers’ and ‘educators’ interchangeably. The Employment of Educators Act of South Africa (Act 76 of 1998) defines an educator as: “any person, who teaches,

educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at any public school, further education and training institution, departmental office or adult basic education centre and who is appointed in a post or any educator establishment under the act". This study adopted the definition by the Employment of Educators Act of South Africa (Act 76 of 1998).

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The researcher believes that the study into the important role of teachers in the curriculum development might assist teachers in effective implementation of the curriculum. Stakeholder involvement in curriculum development in the education system is known to increase the effectiveness of planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational programmes (Uganda National Commission for UNESCO, 2010). This study throws more light on the important roles which teachers can play in curriculum development at provincial and district level. The study is significant to the Department of Education (DoE) in Siyabuswa Circuit, especially to district curriculum specialists, as it reveals challenges faced by teachers in relation to the implementation of the developed curriculum. The department can use the findings to review teachers' involvement in curriculum development. The study can help the department to discover ways in which teachers can work together with curriculum specialists in the district in curriculum development.

### **1.6.1 Theoretical Framework**

Taba's Curriculum Theory is a favourable theory for this study. Developed by Hilda Taba, this theory advocates for a systematic, teacher-centred approach to curriculum design. Taba emphasised the importance of teacher involvement in curriculum development, arguing that those closest to the learners are best positioned to design curricula that meet their specific needs. In addition, Taba emphasised teacher participation and advocated a bottom-ups approach in which the teacher plays an important role (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018) .This bottom-up approach contrasts with top-down models, where administrators or policymakers dictate the curriculum without sufficient input from teachers. By involving teachers directly in the development process, Taba's theory ensures that the curriculum is more responsive



to student needs and more likely to be successfully implemented in the classroom. Please refer to Chapter 2 for more details on the theory underpinned in the study.

## **1.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative research approach was followed, which allowed the researcher to investigate and explore teachers' perspectives regarding their roles in curriculum creation and the context of their participation in the curriculum. A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to observe teachers in their natural settings and learn how they interpret the curriculum to plan their daily classes. According to Lichtman (2013:79) qualitative investigation as a research method, typically performed in a natural environment, uses the investigator as the significant utensil in fact-gathering and analysis.

### **1.7.1. Research Design**

A research design is the cornerstone of the research study and needs a detailed plan according to White (2013; 221). Wellington (2015) contends that the research design should take into account logistical considerations in addition to the sequencing procedure. The research design specifies the process for the data required, the methods used to collect and analyse that data, and how all of this will answer the research questions (Grey, 2014). Grey (2014) identifies three possible forms of research design: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. According to Grey (2014), explanatory studies attempt to ask 'why' and 'how' questions and descriptive research tend to ask 'what' questions. On the other hand, exploratory research is conducted when little is known about a phenomenon and the problem is not clearly defined (Saunders et al., 2012). This study used explanatory research that examined teachers' lived experiences and how these affect their everyday lives.

### **1.7.2. Research Paradigm**

The interpretive paradigm was the foundation of the study. This perspective was typically seen as an approach suited to qualitative research and is often combined with constructivism (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Creswell and Creswell (2017) suggest the purpose of the interpretivist approach is to understand and describe meaningful social action in a dialogic discourse. Modise (2022) asserts that the nature of communication in interpretivist paradigms is transactional, making it

suitable for interviews. This is the conceptual lens through which the researcher examines the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods used and how the data will be analysed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 26).

The interpretive paradigm holds that interacting with participants in natural settings advocates a socially constructed reality and can result in obtaining opinions, perceptions, and experiences about a specific phenomenon. This indicates that the root of the interpretive paradigm falls within the understanding that teaching and learning is a process of making meaning through interaction. The classroom, as a broader context and the curriculum, views learning as an on-going process where interaction is shaped between the teacher and the learner. In this study the researcher sought to understand the interaction and the process of the teacher's involvement in curriculum design and development and how their interaction with learners can help improve the curriculum and learner performance. The interpretive paradigm enabled me to generate information collaboratively to understand the members' meaning of their perceptions, opinions, and experiences (Silverman, 2013).

### **1.7.3. Research Approach**

In order to answer the research topic, the researcher used a qualitative study approach. Research strategy is a researcher's guidance and guidelines (Yin, 2013). The researcher should then follow these guidelines to answer the research questions and resolve the problem under review (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). For this research, the study followed a case study. The case study research helped me gain an in-depth understanding of the role of teachers in curriculum development within a real-life context. Hay and Wood (2011) suggest researchers leading qualitative research aim to apprehend the phenomenon through the perceptiveness of those who require direct instant contact with the phenomenon through the eyes of others. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018) define a case study as "studying a concept in the sense of real life." In this analysis, the case to be studied was the participation of teachers in creating the curriculum. The benefit of using a case study is that it offers the investigator the prospect of participating in further in-depth dialogues and offers a

prospect for intensive interrogation of specific details frequently ignored by other approaches.

#### **1.7.4. Population and Sampling**

Population includes an aggregate collection of all research subjects from which researchers want to draw concrete conclusions. According to Rahi (2017), a population is a collection of people, things or events that share some traits and that a researcher is particularly interested in studying. The target population of this study was teachers from four schools at Siyabuswa Circuit in Mpumalanga Province. After identifying the study population, the researcher conducted sampling. McMillan and Schumacher define sampling as a procedure to select a sample consisting of specific units, such as people or objects from a given population, so that the results of a study can be sufficiently generalised to the selected population.

Purposeful sampling was used to choose the research locations and participants to increase understanding of the phenomenon under study (Maree, 2020). Martella, Nelson, Morgan, Marchard and Martella (2013: 305) define "purposive sampling as selecting individuals deliberately, events or settings for the important information they provide". Schools were chosen based on their socio-economic status, and from each school two participants were selected. The participants were those who had experienced the implementation of the curriculum change, especially those who had been in the system for five years. Daniel (2012) states that the collection of the objective population is completely based on their suitability for the analysis and clear requirements for addition or elimination.

#### **1.7.5. Data Collection**

The data collection methods should aim to gather as much knowledge about the essence of the key role of teachers in creating curricula. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews for the qualitative part of the study. The interview data was collected through face-to-face interviews or via ZOOM. Tracy (2013) supports face-to-face interviews for their clear advantage of providing rich data and allowing the researcher an opportunity to observe non-verbal communication, which presents its own set of cues to a researcher. Roulston (2014: 304) describes interviews as "purpose-based discussion". Data analysis was conducted in order to analyse

available documents on historical curriculum-related transactions and compliance with curriculum design and development guidelines.

#### **1.7.6. Trustworthiness and Credibility of the Study**

The trustworthiness of the study refers to the degree to which the data and data analysis were credible and reliable. Connelly (2016) asserts that qualitative research uses the trustworthiness of research; it is becoming more and more acknowledged and valued because it makes use of the reliability of research. According to Connelly (2016), being trustworthy entails demonstrating authenticity, conformability, transferability, and credibility. The study focused on these four components. More information is provided in Chapter 3.

#### **1.7.7 Data Analysis**

The researcher synthesised and sought to make sense throughout the cycle of thematic analysis of large amounts of raw data to identify appropriate themes, categories, and patterns (Schreier, 2012: 170). The researcher was able to review details and uncover common patterns and opinions from all the participants. Collected data was coded and arranged into categories (Alhojailan, 2012). Themes were then identified as they emerged. The information was organised according to the research study's questions and objectives. Clarke and Braun's (2006, 2017) thematic analysis steps were followed (Chapter 3). The thematic analysis and interpretation aimed to explain the experiences of participants and how they create meaning and reinforce the voices of the participants and research individuals in their natural contexts (Bless, HigsonSmith, & Sithole, 2013). The researcher focused on presenting clear inductive explanations and analysis of the role of teachers involved in curriculum development and how the Department of Education interprets the participation of teachers in syllabus development at schools in South Africa, Mpumalanga Province.

### **1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Throughout the analysis, the participants in the study were made aware of the study's intent. Du PlooyCilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhout (2014: 262-268) argue that respect for participants implies acceptance of the right to be aware of the existence and implications of a study, the right to determine whether to take part in the

proposed research and the right to discontinue at any time. Mills, Durepos, Wiebe, Lui and Maitlis (2010: 22) describe discretion as conserving evidence collected throughout the research study. Authorisation was required to use a recording device in interviews, and after completion of the analysis the audio recordings were deleted to protect participants. Participants were only interviewed after they had given their consent. The researchers sought permission and obtained ethical clearance to conduct the study from the University of South Africa. The researcher requested approval from the Siyabuswa circuit, letters of permission from the heads of the partaking schools and Mpumalanga Province Basic Education Department. The selected schools for the study were informed through a letter from the Provincial Head of Department that the researcher was granted permission to conduct the research.

## **1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH**

### **Chapter 1**

This chapter provides a general introduction and background to the research in relation to the title: Exploration of the important role of teachers in the development of the curriculum in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. From this, the problem statement and questions were generated. This chapter also covers the key concepts, aims and objectives of the research.

### **Chapter 2**

In this chapter, the researcher will evaluate the literature on the title of the research, and the theoretical framework in order to understand the research issue.

### **Chapter 3**

This chapter discusses the research methodology. It entails the research design, the chosen paradigm, population, and sample size and sample techniques, method of data collection, trustworthiness, data analysis and ethical considerations.

### **Chapter 4**

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to address the research questions of the study. The primary research question, "What is the role of teachers in

curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province?” is explored through an analysis of data collected from interviews and document analysis. The findings and interpretations are presented according to the themes derived from these research questions.

## **Chapter 5**

Chapter 5 presents the summary of the findings obtained from the participants, draws conclusions from the research and gives recommendations and suggestions.

### **1.10. SUMMARY**

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study, aimed at exploring the role of teachers in the development of the curriculum in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. The background of the study, problem statement, research purpose and objectives, research questions and significance were dealt with. Teachers' roles and involvement in the curriculum development were identified and justified. Concept clarification was covered with the aims and objectives of the study in mind. The next chapter will focus on the relevant literature review on the role of teachers in the development of the curriculum.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the literature review that explores the complex relationship between teacher development and curriculum implementation. The chapter then examines how curriculum reforms are interpreted and applied in classrooms, the impact of teacher training on effective curriculum delivery, and the broader challenges faced in aligning curriculum policies with local educational contexts. It ends by presenting the theoretical framework that underpinned this research study. It does so by discussing other related theories with the aim to put a case for the chosen theory for this study.

By reviewing relevant theories and empirical studies, the chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing curriculum implementation and highlights the critical need for targeted teacher development initiatives. The insights gained from this review will inform the research into how teacher support and development can be enhanced to improve curriculum effectiveness and educational outcomes.

### **2.2. OVERVIEW OF CURRICULUM REFORMS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Patel, Mohammed, and Koen (2024) describe the significant curriculum reforms in post-apartheid South Africa, aimed at addressing inequality and enhancing educational quality. The introduction of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) reflects the government's efforts to standardise education and align it with contemporary needs. These reforms aimed to provide a cohesive educational framework to improve learner outcomes nationwide. However, the implementation of these curricula has encountered several challenges, particularly in addressing the diverse needs of learners across different regions.

Dodd (2021) discusses the importance of visualising several major and interdependent variables when mapping curriculum, referred to as design "layers". While there are many aspects to consider in curriculum design, Dodd (2021) outlines the following crucial key design variables:

- **Outcomes:** The expected learning achievements or performance goals of the curriculum.
- **Content:** The subjects or information included in the curriculum.
- **Instructional Strategies:** The methods used to organise, structure, and present the curriculum to achieve the desired outcomes.
- **Technology:** The tools, whether digital or analog, that aid in the delivery, creation, or evaluation of the curriculum.
- **Data:** The methods and processes for capturing, organising, storing, and representing metrics and data elements.
- **Media:** The resources, either physical or digital, utilised to present the curriculum to learners.
- **Policy:** The principles, rules, or regulations that guide the design of the curriculum.

Annala, Lindén, Mäkinen, and Henriksson (2021) conducted a study at a research university that underwent curriculum change in two phases: first at the departmental level, and then as a university-wide initiative. Their study revealed six forms of agency: progressive, oppositional, territorial, bridge-building, and accommodating, which were present in both contexts. However, the sixth agency, the powerless agency, was identified only during the university-wide curriculum change. The study found that individual, community, and institutional structures either facilitated or hindered these forms of agency.

School education in the context of Covid-19 presented an opportunity for making the school curriculum in South Africa more relevant, posing a fundamental question about which knowledge and experiences are most valuable for school education in response to the pandemic. With schools in South Africa having been closed for an extended period, and social distancing guidelines shaping decisions about reopening (Ramathan, 2021), there has been considerable uncertainty. This situation has prompted speculations, suggestions, proposals, and tentative plans for a recovery strategy to maintain the integrity of the academic year (Ramathan, 2021).



### **2.2.1 Curriculum development within the South African context**

Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was the policy adopted by countries such as Australia, Canada, and parts of the United States (Blignaut & Au, 2014; Bantwini, 2010). Curriculum 2005 (C2005) brought some confusion in educational policy, especially among the teachers and the national documents about the basic conceptual framework, the idea of the curriculum (OBE) and the content of the new curriculum (C2005) in South Africa (Taole, 2015: 267). Despite the widespread support of C2005 and its importance as an ideal curriculum in line with the democratic values of the emerging South Africa (Prew, 2013), inadequate training for educators was introduced to schools with insufficient materials to support and no budget. Considering all the challenges mentioned in the literature implementing C2005 was a challenging task.

Hoadley (2017) also revealed that South African teachers were largely left out of the original classroom curriculum design and development processes. The curriculum was handed down to teachers from above, making them feel that their contribution to the curriculum was only in the classroom, as they were not given sufficient guidance on how to implement it properly. Therefore, teachers have no other role in the development process than simply implementers of the curriculum. Therefore, the low involvement of teachers in the development of curricula is a concern, because teachers are the key to the success of any curriculum. Alsubaie (2016) argues that curriculum development is a difficult undertaking. For example, in South Africa, most teachers are not qualified and lack the necessary skills to participate in curriculum development. Their approach to participation in the process is not well defined and very difficult for teachers, so they face many challenges when they participate in curriculum development.

The professional development of teachers is an important factor in the success of curriculum development and implementation. Ajani (2019:54), who sparked interest in this study, argued that teachers were confident that the new educational dispensation would address the lack of teacher involvement in curriculum development if the emphasis on the best training for full-time teachers remains at the forefront of policy, as it is worldwide (Darling-Hammond, 2016). For this reason, all relevant stakeholders must be involved. Teachers, in particular, who directly interact

with the curriculum and learners can be used as important tools for successful curriculum development and revision.

Teachers' professional contribution and involvement in curriculum planning, implementation, evaluation, and revision provide a solid foundation for an important curriculum (Schlein & Schwarz, 2015). As change agents in schools, school leaders help teachers make pedagogical improvements that help learners reach their full potential. Jojo (2019:102) indicates that South Africa's political transformation since 1994 has focused on removing the legacies of the past apartheid regime, particularly segregation and inequality. Democracy has found its place in the structure and management of schools and now is in the hands of the school community, parents, teachers, and learners.

The results of the National Curriculum and Assessment Report (NCCA, 2020) show that the level of autonomy for teacher curriculum development varies across the countries represented, from a defined, centrally planned curriculum to greater freedoms, as in the Netherlands. The report examines teachers' independent competence in teaching, such as professional knowledge, commitment to change and teamwork. Taljaard (2018: 17) adds that if teachers are given sufficient autonomy, they could also add local concepts to the curriculum according to the needs and interests of the learners. From the above, it is clear that teachers must be involved in curriculum development, but actual involvement was not reported and was almost always limited to the implementation phase. The same case was observed in Turkey, where researchers reveal that the National Ministry of Education (MoNE) and its Boards of Education are responsible for the preparation and design of the national curriculum, which has become mandatory for all schools (Dogan & Altun, 2013).

Therefore, teachers' participation in curriculum planning and development is limited, and, instead, they are seen as curriculum implementers and instructors tasked with bringing the formal curriculum into their classrooms. Based on the above literature, many researchers argue that the majority of teachers in African countries and elsewhere in the world are curriculum receivers and providers. Therefore, their role is seen as implementing ideas inspired by curriculum developers, who are mostly policy makers and not educators.

### **2.2.2 Curriculum development in international and national contexts**

The curriculum for education has changed continuously in South Africa. However, Shava (2016) was concerned that African formal education curricula continue to be characterised by the dominance of Western information systems and a reluctance to represent and apply local knowledge in formal education. He believes that this state of affairs is due to the history of colonisation and globalisation trends, which continue to establish Western ideals as the only possible path to socio-economic development in a post-colonial context. However, some of the challenges faced by the teachers in the South African education system are not unique; other countries are also experiencing some similar challenges in their contexts.

Abudu and Mensah (2016) identified several barriers that prevent teachers from participating in curriculum development in Ghana. They state that “the main obstacles teachers encounter when attempting to undertake curriculum development include large workload, lack of expertise, limited funding, and unavailability of information about when to begin curriculum development” (p.28). Over the past several decades, resources, teachers, and policymakers have sought to prepare future generations for life in a changing global society. Therefore, there is increasing interest in the global aspects of school curriculum (Chou & Ting, 2016:533). Teachers who actively participate in the curriculum development process are likely to share ownership, which may lead to effective implementation of this product.

Teachers from Nigeria were rarely involved in the curriculum development (Oluruntegebe, 2011). In the same way, in Kenya, teachers’ experiences and abilities were only used during the period of curriculum development and most teachers were only active during the phase of implementation (Kobiah, 2016).

Some developed countries, such as Finland, Singapore and Australia, have adopted a grassroots (bottom-up) approach to curriculum development processes (Skedsmo & Huber, 2019; Beblavy & Muzikarova, 2021). Similarly, Vatikka et al. (2015) found that such teacher participation increased curriculum accountability, responsibility, and teacher motivation. Although Estonia has a very good education system and Estonia was ranked first among other OECD countries in the PISA 2015 survey, there are certain challenges in the implementation of curricula. Since 1999, curriculum reforms have given teachers the freedom and autonomy to make choices about their teaching

strategies (Erss, 2018), although this has led to a new kind of uncertainty in curriculum requirements. These challenges only create negative experiences such as frustration, disappointment and demotivation in which teachers try to fulfil their role as curriculum leaders (Pedaste, Kori, Tonisson, Palts, Altin & Rantsus, 2017).

Singapore's education system places great emphasis on advanced examinations. Boon's (2017) research into the teaching of history in Singapore reveals challenges in curriculum implementation arising from assessment-led curriculum. Boon (2017) also reported challenges related to content overload, limited time allocation and common content, pedagogy, and heavy teacher workload associated with assessment changes. The complexity, urgency, and challenges of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are unique (Baghdady & Zaki, 2019). Many SSA countries ignore the factors that are catalysts for successful curriculum reforms (Bunmi & Taiwo, 2017).

In addition, the lack of consultation with teachers makes teachers see the curriculum implementation as being imposed on them. This top-down approach to curriculum innovation explains curriculum failure. According to Bishangurwa (2017), the curriculum in Tanzanian schools is not well managed. The principals struggle to interpret and manage the curriculum, and its implementation does not improve learner outcomes. The curriculum is managed centrally, and the end users are teachers and learners.

Those responsible for the implementation of the curriculum should be involved in their planning. Because much curriculum work is focused on creating curriculum for classroom use, teachers are often involved as members of curriculum development teams. If teachers are not actively involved in developing their own curriculum, people from outside will soon prepare and plan for them. Bottom-up strategies can never be successful because they assume passive receivers and rational adopters. Therefore, it is important for teachers to participate in matters related to curriculum development. Scholars such as Etim and Okey (2015) advocate for the contribution of teachers in the development of curricula, and Oluruntegbe (2011) stated "that teachers should participate in all stages of curriculum development". Teachers may not be familiar with curriculum development, but their participation is very significant. The next section looks at the challenges in curriculum implementation.

### **2.2.3 Challenges in Curriculum Implementation**

Letshwene and du Plessis (2021) studied challenges encountered in implementing the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for accounting in South African schools. Their study reports on difficulties experienced by heads of department (HODs) related to CAPS implementation. The researchers identified several key challenges: the medium of instruction, time allocated to complete the syllabus, a weak subject content foundation, learner progression issues, and the integration of economic and management sciences (EMS).

Vandeyar (2019) points out that although curriculum reforms like the NCS and the CAPS are well-intentioned, their effectiveness largely depends on successful implementation by teachers. Research highlights that teachers often face difficulties with the practical application of these curricula due to inadequate support and resources. For example, Dube (2020) noted that teachers struggle with interpreting and adapting curriculum guidelines to local contexts, which leads to inconsistent educational outcomes. Further, Dube discusses how political and social changes have influenced curriculum implementation, emphasising that these reforms frequently fail to address the practical challenges that educators encounter in the classroom.

Derakhshan et al. (2020) highlight that despite a substantial body of research demonstrating the strong connection between teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) and their attitudes towards research, as well as their professional effectiveness and success, previous studies have not adequately examined the combined impact of teachers' CPD needs and their perceptions of research on their overall success. This gap in the literature suggests the need for further exploration of how these factors jointly contribute to teachers' professional achievements. Dube (2020) highlights the unprecedented challenges learners face in adapting to a new mode of living and learning, characterised by the widespread use of online learning management systems and technological applications. The article presents critical emancipation research, which advocates for social justice, empowerment, and social inclusion in teaching and learning. The goal is to build a better future for all learners.

Meier and West (2020) examine the challenges associated with overcrowded classrooms in South African education. They note that the education system in South Africa faces a shortage of teachers and inadequate school infrastructure, which exacerbates classroom overcrowding. Their study elaborates on the impacts and challenges related to over crowdedness, including didactical neglect, discipline issues, and negative teacher attitudes. They provide practical recommendations for addressing these challenges and conclude by emphasising the importance of a collaborative effort among all stakeholders, such as School Management Teams and teachers to effectively tackle the issues caused by overcrowded classrooms.

Mamabolo (2021) explores the difficulties primary school teachers face when implementing the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) program. The study, which focuses on ten teachers, was motivated by observed misinterpretations of teaching and learning programs related to CAPS. It utilises the theory of assimilation and accommodation to understand how teachers handle curriculum challenges arising from this new program across five primary schools. Employing an interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology, the research aimed to provide in-depth, meaningful data. Interviews were conducted to capture the teachers' lived experiences and perspectives on the implementation of CAPS.

Erstad, Kjällander, and Järvelä (2021) emphasise the increasing importance of digital technology in curriculum plans over the last decade. Despite its centrality, there is a scarcity of research on curricula in the digital age, particularly concerning "digital competence" as a new didactic area in education. The article discusses and analyses two interrelated issues: recent trends in curriculum development regarding digital competence in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and related research initiatives that are significant for establishing digital competence as a distinct educational field.

Dodd (2021) explains that curriculum design can be complex, involving various forms of data, information, and goals. To manage this complexity and facilitate decision-making, curriculum designers often use representations or diagrams. These curriculum representations serve as tools for communication and collaboration during the design process, helping to outline how the curriculum will be organised and presented to learners.

## **2.2.4 Teacher involvement in curriculum development**

Despite their integral role in the educational process, teachers traditionally have no say in curriculum development. Since education is designed to meet the needs of society, curriculum development processes should involve people's experience in the relevant social system, in this case the teacher (Priestley et al., 2021). Their roles, challenges, first-hand experiences, and perspectives are often ignored in South Africa and elsewhere (Gokmenoglu & Clark, 2015). Teachers are the most fundamental group in the curriculum development process and should thus be involved in every stage. According to Boyle and Charles (2016), teachers' curriculum development committees can draw from the teachers' experience and knowledge, easily and quickly identify deficiencies in the current curriculum, and better identify the needs of learners.

In other words, teachers have the opportunity and skills to recognise the most appropriate teaching methods, learning environments and assessment methods in the classroom. As Carl (2017) argues, involving teachers in curriculum development processes usually helps them share their experiences of the opportunities, challenges, and limitations of teaching. Teachers need to be able to affect these decisions by participating in the curriculum development process. Priestley et al. (2021) suggest that the best curriculum reforms should involve grassroots users as early as possible through a bottom-up approach. Supporting this view, Etim and Okey (2015) also noted that teachers should be involved in all these processes because they are more aware of learners' needs than anyone else involved in the curriculum development process. Priestley and Xenofontos (2020) argued that effective curriculum development must be based on the development of conceptual understanding guided by curriculum developers such as teachers.

Teachers should become foot soldiers in driving curriculum reform processes, not allowing them to be passengers. Although teachers are trained to deal with various challenges, not every teacher finds it so easy to deal with curriculum challenges due to the ever-changing nature and needs of society. This therefore means that the involvement of teachers in these reforms would help minimise some of the common problems that are endemic in the system (Bilbao, 2018). However, research shows

that teachers' inadequate involvement in the curriculum development process and inability to influence decisions in this process dissatisfies them.

### **2.2.5 The Role of Teacher's Professional Development in Curriculum Reform**

Dodd (2021) argues that teacher development is essential for the successful implementation of curriculum reforms. Effective professional development is crucial for enhancing teachers' abilities to deliver new curricula successfully. However, research shows that many professional development programs are poorly designed and do not address teachers' specific needs. Teachers often receive insufficient ongoing support, which hampers their ability to adapt and implement curriculum changes effectively. This gap in teacher development contributes to difficulties in curriculum delivery and negatively impacts student performance. Sims, Fletcher-Wood, and Anders (2023) emphasise that effective teacher professional development (PD) hinges on motivating teachers to adopt new practices.

Meier and West (2020) emphasise that teacher professional development is a continuous process aimed at improving educators' teaching practices and their ability to adapt to new curricula. Effective professional development is defined by its integration into daily teaching, collaborative nature, and alignment with teachers' needs and instructional goals. Its primary objectives are to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills, deepen content knowledge, and support the effective implementation of curriculum reforms. The success of these reforms heavily relies on the quality and relevance of professional development programs.

Reimers (2020), on the other hand, describes that teachers initially familiarise themselves with the new curriculum and the introduction of transversal competences through national-level curriculum work. During the local curriculum development process, teachers and other stakeholders are actively involved in preparing the local curriculum, detailing how transversal competences are integrated into school subjects.

Derakhshan et al. (2020) argue that teachers can develop a more positive attitude towards research and become research literate by engaging in research during graduate and post-graduate programs, receiving research training at their workplace, attending online research courses, reading research books, exploring research



journals in their field, and participating in conferences, workshops, and forums on research-related topics. They recommend that teacher educators, including those in Iran's educational system, redesign their professional development programs to address the specific needs of teachers in their educational context, rather than offering theory-based, universal programs. This approach is essential to preparing teachers who can effectively manage the daily challenges of the classroom.

Barros, Domke, Symons, and Ponzio (2020) advocate for translanguaging as an instructional approach that fundamentally redefines educators' perceptions of multilingualism as a valuable asset. They emphasise the critical role of teacher education programs in preparing educators to implement this vision. However, research on teachers' receptivity to translanguaging and its epistemological shift towards integrating multilingualism into mainstream education is still limited.

Timm and Barth (2020) examine how teachers can effectively implement education for sustainable development (ESD) in elementary schools. Their analysis incorporates the perspectives of experienced ESD teachers, enriching the academic discussion with practical insights. The study makes three original contributions: (1) It provides justification for aspects of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and content knowledge (CK), highlighting the shared understanding of competency relevance in teaching and the need for institutional-level action. (2) It uses an example from ESD in Germany to illustrate these competencies. (3) It contributes to the ESD discourse by including (a) teachers' viewpoints, (b) the drivers and barriers to ESD as reported by teachers, and (c) an evaluation of the structural competencies of ESD teachers, including their awareness of institutional structures, hierarchies, and communication patterns.

Martinez (2022) investigates the development of 21st-century teaching skills through project-based curricula. The study argues that both aspiring and experienced teachers would benefit from learning opportunities focused on two key areas: (1) performance-based curricula that demonstrate content knowledge and college and career readiness skills, and (2) curriculum design that differentiates and scaffolds instruction for diverse learners. Although there is a lack of research specifically addressing teacher preparation for the extensive changes required by the college and career readiness reform movement, Martinez evaluates the use of project-based

learning units. These units align with core elements of college readiness, including integration across content areas, work-based learning experiences, and the use of common assessment rubrics.

Martinez (2022) describes a course where teachers met weekly for two hours and forty-five minutes over 16 weeks. The course aimed to help teachers develop an integrated curriculum aligned with industry-based technical knowledge and principles. Teachers designed key components of a study program, including a college preparatory curriculum, a Career Technical Education course sequence, student learning outcomes, and an interdisciplinary project-based learning (PBL) unit. They worked in cross-disciplinary teams of 4–6 teachers, selected by the instructor.

Sancar, Atal, and Deryakulu (2021) propose a new framework for enhancing teachers' professional development. The ongoing debate in education literature questions whether "teacher quality is the most significant school variable affecting student achievement and school improvement." In this context, educational leaders, theorists, and researchers have concentrated on methods to enhance teaching quality to boost student learning and achievement. Each year, countries invest substantial amounts of money to improve their teachers' skills and qualifications by expanding professional development (PD) opportunities.

### **2.2.6 Implications for Policy and Practice**

Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, and Osher (2020) discuss the implications of the science of learning and development for educational practices. The literature highlights that overcoming curriculum implementation challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach. Enhancing teacher development programs is essential for providing educators with the skills and support required to adapt and effectively deliver curricula. Policymakers must prioritise the specific needs of teachers by offering targeted professional development that directly addresses these needs. Moreover, bolstering resources and support systems for teachers is crucial in bridging the gap between curriculum reforms and classroom practices. The authors situate their review within a developmental systems framework, synthesising evidence from the learning sciences and various educational research branches to outline well-established strategies that foster the relationships and learning

opportunities necessary for children's well-being, healthy development, and transferable learning.

Irawati, Najili, Supiana, and Zaqiah (2022) examine how countries have responded to the Covid-19 crisis by issuing policies tailored to their specific needs. These policies are informed by data and the unique requirements of each country to avoid exacerbating educational disruptions caused by the pandemic. The study highlights the importance of effective policymaking in ensuring that curricula remain adaptable and flexible. This flexibility is crucial for adjusting learning content and schedules to mitigate the learning losses and educational challenges brought about by the crisis, drawing parallels with the lessons learned from past disasters such as Hurricane Katrina.

Irawati, Najili, Supiana, and Zaqiah (2022) conducted studies on curriculum redesign processes across various countries and synthesised effective principles of curriculum design. The OECD categorised these principles into four groups based on their scope of application:

- **Curriculum or Achievement Standards Design:** Focus, accuracy, and coherence.
- **General Curriculum Design:** Competency transfer, interdisciplinarity, and elective options.
- **Macro-Level Curriculum Policies:** Authenticity, flexibility, and alignment.
- **Curriculum Design Work Processes:** Engagement, student empowerment, and teacher empowerment.

These principles serve as a reference for developing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, emphasising a systematic and accountable approach to curriculum design.

Dwivedi et al. (2023) explore the implications of generative conversational AI, such as ChatGPT, on research and policy. The discussion highlights how advances in AI technologies, including their applications in education, are reshaping the field. While the use of AI in learning has historical roots with early pioneers, its widespread implementation today is met with critical evaluation. Concerns about the cost, effectiveness, and ethical and privacy issues associated with AI technologies are

emerging as significant factors influencing their integration into educational practices and policies.

Ainscow (2020) asserts that policy in education operates at multiple levels, including schools and classrooms. Promoting equity and inclusion goes beyond mere technical or organisational adjustments; it represents a significant philosophical shift. Achieving inclusive education requires comprehensive changes throughout the education system, from altering policymakers' values and perspectives to fostering a vision that shapes an inclusive culture. For this culture to thrive, there must be a shared set of assumptions and beliefs among senior staff at various levels that value differences, encourage collaboration, and commit to providing educational opportunities for all learners. However, transforming cultural norms within an education system is challenging, especially amid numerous competing pressures and the tendency for practitioners to address issues in isolation.

Curriculum developers claim that there are no guidelines or rules governing decisions about stakeholder engagement (Ndanu, 2017). This creates a rift between the teachers and curriculum developers, and ultimately the learners are the ones who suffer most. Many young people drop out of school early, and the system's high rate of grade repetition make the already low average levels of education and wide disparities even worse (Zure, Reddy, Visser, Wimar & Govender, 2015: 12).

Mamabolo (2021) defines curriculum implementation as the process of putting curriculum plans and policies into action within educational settings. This involves translating curriculum guidelines into actual classroom practices and ensuring effective delivery of educational content to learners. Key factors influencing this process include teacher preparedness, availability of resources, and contextual challenges. Effective implementation demands a clear understanding of curriculum goals, sufficient teacher training, and continuous support to address emerging challenges.

### **2.2.7 Teacher Adaptation and Innovation**

Deed et al. (2020) explores how teachers modify their practices in response to modern flexible learning environments. This adaptation involves altering instructional strategies, materials, and assessments to suit the local context and meet diverse

student needs. Teachers' capacity to innovate and adapt is shaped by their professional development, experience, and grasp of curriculum goals. Effective adaptation is essential for meeting learners' varied needs and ensuring that curriculum reforms are successfully implemented.

Kilag, Marquita, & Laurente (2023) noted that teachers are situated at the crossroads of theory and practice, effectively incorporate innovative teaching strategies, technologies, and instructional methods into curricula to keep pace with changing educational trends and student needs. A key objective is aligning curricula with student requirements, which emphasises teachers' capacity to adapt curricula to accommodate diverse learning profiles. This alignment is considered a significant factor in enhancing student learning outcomes.

Hosseini, Rastegar Haghighi Shirazi, & Xu (2021) noted that teachers are essential stakeholders crucial to the success of schools. One key factor influencing both teachers' and learners' achievement is teacher innovative work behaviour. Given the rapid technological advancements, social changes, and the competitive nature of today's market, fostering teacher innovation has become vital for the growth and sustainability of schools. Despite its significance, the factors driving innovation in education have been inadequately explored.

### **2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section discusses the theoretical framework within which this study was conducted. The section also presents several key theories relevant to understanding teacher development and curriculum implementation.

According to Grant and Osanloo (2014), a theoretical framework is a blueprint or guide for research, and it's designed to guide aspects of research such as problem statement, literature review, methodology, presentation, and discussion of results. Brondizio, Leemans & Solecki (2014) argue particular theory or theories are "about aspects of human effort that is useful for studying events".

The theoretical framework of this study was the Taba Model of curriculum design and development by Carl (2017). According to Carl (2017) and Portillo et al. (2020), the Taba Model offers a structured reasoning pattern for curriculum design, allowing

educators to participate as practitioners in the process. Taba believed that teachers who teach or implement the curriculum should participate in its development.

The section thus begins with an overview of curriculum implementation theories, then gives a detailed presentation of the Taba Model of curriculum design and development and ends with a chapter summary.

### **2.3.1 Theories of Curriculum Implementation**

Nsengimana, Mugabo, Hiroaki, and Nkundabakura (2024) discuss how the theory of curriculum implementation serves as a framework for understanding how teachers adapt and apply curriculum guidelines in their classrooms. This theory highlights the importance of teachers' professional knowledge, their ability to interpret and modify curricula, and the impact of contextual factors on the implementation process. However, the literature reveals gaps in the theory of curriculum implementation. Specifically, the actual profile of curriculum implementation and the capacity to innovate are rated lower than what the theory suggests.

Pugach, Blanton, and Boveda (2019) argue that curriculum theory is often neglected in teacher education for inclusion. They view curriculum theory as a crucial framework for renegotiating teacher education curricula to better support inclusion. The teacher education curriculum needs a community of educators who can balance a shared equity agenda to prepare all teachers for inclusion while also preparing specialists who can address the specific learning needs of marginalised learners, including those with disabilities. Without a comprehensive approach to curriculum, achieving deep transformation will be challenging, and the roles of prospective special education teachers may remain unclear.

Paraskeva (2021) describes conflicts in curriculum theory as a seminal work that not only offers alternative perspectives on education and curriculum but also introduces innovative scholarship and a radical conceptual framework for the field.

### **2.3.2 Professional Development Theory**

Rutten (2021) explores professional development (PD) in preservice teacher education, identifying process orientation, collaboration, reflection, dedicated time, and skilled facilitation as essential features of practitioner inquiry. Reported outcomes

for preservice teachers include the adoption of new instructional strategies, assessments, and technologies. These findings were incorporated into an existing framework to develop an emerging PD theory of action. This theory emphasises the importance of continuous professional learning in enhancing teachers' ability to implement curricula effectively, stressing that effective PD should be ongoing, collaborative, and closely aligned with teachers' instructional practices and curriculum needs.

A new theory and meta-analysis on effective teacher professional development emphasises that teachers' motivation plays a crucial role in adopting new practices. They argue that professional development (PD) may not improve teaching if it fails to motivate teachers to change their practices. Thus, building on previous theories, a key goal of PD should be to enhance teachers' motivation to change, defined as a person's willingness to exert effort toward a goal. Another area where PD can fall short is in teachers applying what they have learned in the classroom. For instance, a three-year study found that while early-career science teachers strongly believed in the importance of student-centred teaching methods, this belief was not always reflected in their classroom practices (Sims, Fletcher-Wood, and Anders, 2023).

Continuing professional development (CPD) is crucial for the lifelong learning of health professionals, but current evaluations often examine only a narrow range of impacts. They present a model of early childhood leadership professional development based on iterative data analysis and theory-building methods. Their findings indicate that the model positively affects leaders' self-reported facilitation and application of developmentally appropriate strategies in positive discipline and prosocial skills within early care and education settings. The practice-to-theory training model they developed offers a theoretically cohesive framework for guiding the professional development of early childhood program leaders. This model helps leaders address practical issues by integrating theory as a necessary tool and pragmatic anchor for solving real-world problems, effectively bridging the theory/practice divide (Myran and Masterson, 2020).

Derakhshan, Coombe, Zhaleh, and Tabatabaeian (2020) examine the significance of continuing professional development (PD) and research for the success of English language teachers. They identify three models of language teacher PD. The first is

the top-down model, also known as the expert-driven process, which is typically imposed by an institution or school with minimal teacher input, focusing on the institution's needs rather than those of the teachers. The second is the bottom-up model, where PD is entirely directed by the individual teachers themselves. The third model, called interactive PD, incorporates both institutional and individual teachers' needs through collaborative efforts between teachers and the institution. The authors suggest that promoting this interactive model of PD could positively influence teachers' effectiveness in practice.

### **2.3.3 Change Theory**

Reinholz and Andrews (2020) provide a broad definition of change research, describing it as any scholarly work focused on understanding and facilitating change. They note that change research can vary in its theoretical or empirical grounding, with some being well-supported by evidence and others more speculative. A key aspect of this research is change theory, which they define as a framework of ideas, backed by evidence that explains aspects of change beyond a single project. Change theories offer generalised insights into how change occurs, with some being well-established and empirically validated, while others may be based on limited evidence from specific contexts. In the field of educational change, these theories address a wide range of components and processes related to implementing change.

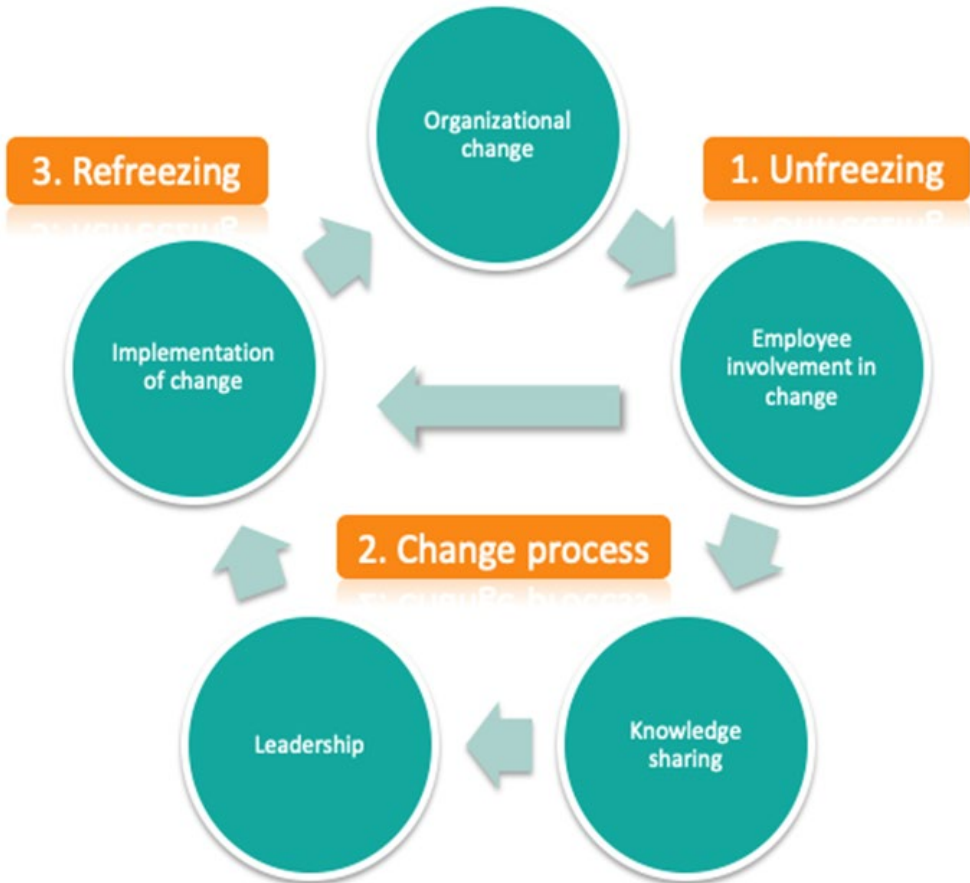
Adelman-Mullally, Nielsen, and Chung (2023) point out that change can be uncomfortable, especially in hierarchical organisations where significant changes are needed. It is crucial to address both the processes and the people involved when planning and implementing change. Members of the organisation may look for existing theories and models to assist in managing the transition. Shifting routine practices whether they are organisational norms established through consensus or personal habits developed by choice often means stepping away from what feels natural and facing the discomfort of uncertainty and difference.

Reinholz and Andrews (2020) differentiate between a theory of change and change theory in the context of systemic change projects in STEM higher education. A theory of change is specific to a particular project and is closely related to evaluation processes. It articulates the project's underlying rationale, thereby aiding in its planning, implementation, and assessment. This type of theory is often a requirement



by funding agencies in grant proposals. On the other hand, change theories encompass broader theoretical and empirically grounded knowledge about how change occurs, extending beyond individual projects. Ideally, a theory of change is developed with guidance from established change theories.

Bhayangkara, Ahmadi, Firdaus, Prestiadi, and Sumarsono (2020) highlight that the Kurt Lewin model proves effective in enhancing teacher capabilities through instructional leadership. Kurt Lewin's Change Theory (Figure 2.1) provides a framework for understanding how educational reforms are adopted and implemented. It suggests that successful change involves three key stages: unfreezing existing practices, implementing new approaches, and refreezing these changes to ensure they are sustained. This theory helps explain how teachers adapt to new curriculum reforms and the factors influencing their adoption.



**Figure 2.1.** Lewin's 3 Stage Model of Change

The study's results indicate that: (1) instructional leadership plays a crucial role in managing the change process, and (2) improving teacher capabilities within a micro-

educational institution involves several steps: a) the unfreezing process is supported through symposiums and routine cultural practices; b) the movement process involves workshops and forming a support team of recent graduate teachers; and c) the refreezing process includes collaborative workshops with Public Elementary Schools and initiation.

Asirifi et al. (2021) examine the alignment and differences between change theory and community-based participatory action research (CBPAR). They question whether some change theories align better with the principles of action research than others and if this alignment varies depending on the type of action research and the change theory being compared. These questions emerged during the implementation of a four-cycle CBPAR project in nursing education in Ghana. For a change theory to effectively guide the implementation cycles of a CBPAR project, it must be viewed through the lens of critical social theory and consider social and cultural change perspectives.

The numerous case studies on curriculum change in higher education institutions (HEIs) suggest that each change process is unique and shaped by its individual context and history. This uniqueness complicates efforts to draw comparisons and limits the ability of HEIs to learn from each other. Nevertheless, reference to existing lists of perceived common drivers and barriers, along with theories on change processes, provide some useful insights (Weiss, Barth, and von Wehrden, 2021).

Vandeyar (2019) discusses the education triad, consisting of the teacher, the learner, and the content (curriculum), all of which operate within historical, political, social, and educational contexts. He argues that changing one component of this triad—such as the curriculum—without considering the others will not achieve the intended change. In the context of universities, despite significant efforts to decolonise the curriculum and address changes in learner demographics, there has been insufficient focus on the academics who deliver the curriculum. Vandeyar (2019) posits that the key issue in the decolonisation of the curriculum in South African universities is the lack of attention to the academic staff. The next section presents the model chosen for this study.

### 2.3.4 Taba Model of Curriculum Design and Development

Taba's Model, often referred to as the "grassroots approach", emphasises that teachers who implement the curriculum should actively participate in its development. This bottom-up approach is centred on teacher involvement, recognising their proximity to learners, and understanding of their needs. Taba (1962) argues that curriculum development should be a collaborative and democratic process involving teachers, who are essential in identifying learner needs and designing effective learning experiences. The model is systematic, following specific steps to ensure a coherent and responsive curriculum that addresses the unique needs of learners (Toptas & Erdem, 2024).

In addition, Taba emphasised teacher participation and advocated a bottom-ups approach in which the teacher plays an important role (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Taba believed that curriculum development follows a specific order and that teachers who teach it should be involved in its development (see Figure 2.2). This led to the model being called the "grassroots" approach.

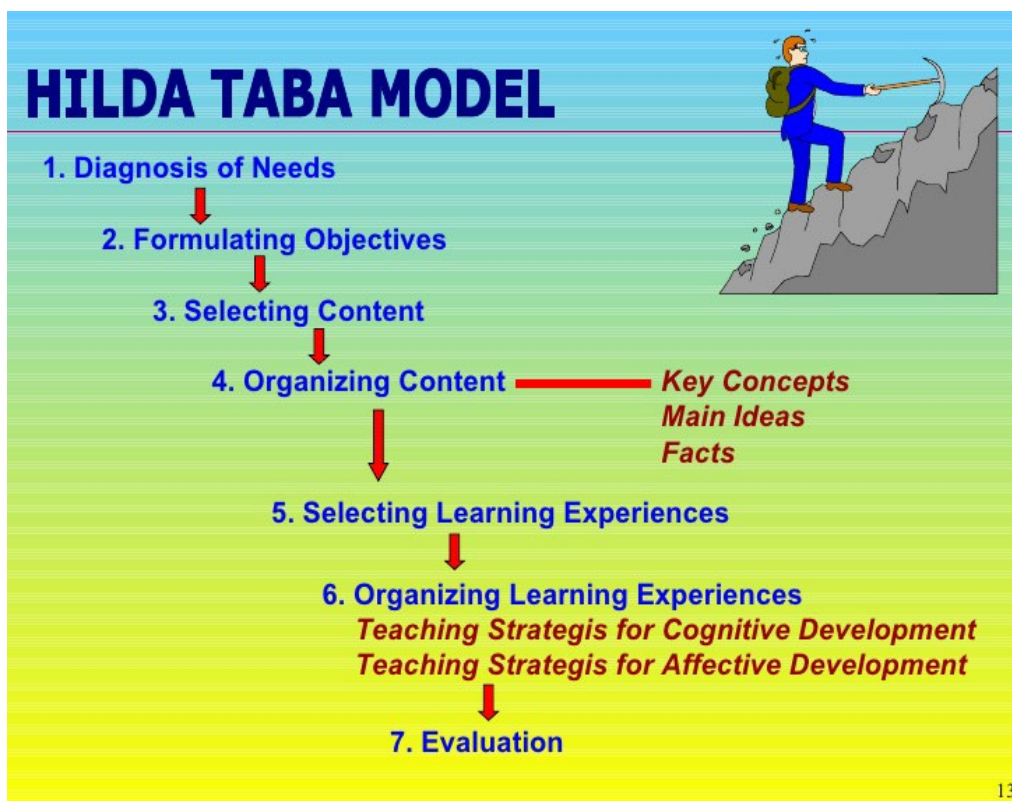


Figure 2.2. Hilda Taba's model of Curriculum Development

Taba (1962) argues that in developing a school curriculum, teachers must formulate hypotheses, collect data, and interpret data to determine what to teach. To fully achieve this goal, teachers must be involved in all aspects of the school curriculum development process. The Taba Model (Figure 2.2) outlines changes at different levels of context: micro (school), meso (provincial and departmental), and macro (national). These changes are facilitated through teacher participation in curriculum design and development. The Taba Model's seven steps for curriculum development are outline below (Toptas & Erdem, 2024):

1. **Diagnosis of Needs:** Identifying the specific skills, knowledge, or abilities that learners lack to succeed in a particular learning environment. A teacher or curriculum developer designs and identifies the needs of the learners. Diagnosing learners' needs requires the teacher to identify specific skills, knowledge, or abilities that the learner lacks in order to succeed in a specific learning environment. This process helps teachers to create targeted and effective learning experiences that meet the unique needs of learners.
2. **Formulation of Objectives:** Setting course goals based on diagnosed needs, specifying both the desired outcomes and the learning process. After diagnosing the learner's needs, the teacher sets course goals. When setting goals, Taba recommends naming both the goal and what lies ahead.
3. **Selecting Content:** Determining relevant content that aligns with the set objectives, considering the meaning and importance to the learners. The content of the curriculum is determined according to the purpose, considering the meaning and relevance of the content.
4. **Organizing Content:** Structuring the order in which content is presented, based on learner motivation, needs, and interests. Taba criticizes the suggestions made by curriculum books at the time in terms of how to organize content, stating that using interests, experiences, life problems, or content topics is ineffective. She encourages organizing content based on focus and writes that focusing the unit on core notions means learners receive a more enriching scope of content and development (Taba, 1962: 305).
5. **Selecting Learning Experiences:** Sequencing learning activities to ensure continuity and reinforcement of learning. In this part of her book, Taba emphasizes that the curriculum comprises content and learning experiences,

which determine how learners assimilate new information. We want our learners to be equipped for problem-solving, adapting to new circumstances, critical thinking and using inquiry skills.

6. **Organizing Learning Experiences:** Aligning learning activities with both the content structure and learner characteristics. After choosing learning experiences, they need to be structured before teaching can take place. Content and learning experience must be organized, and it is noted that a standard curriculum outlines the subjects, topics, and the order in which teachers should cover those topics. Taba's emphasizes the importance of considering learners needs when organizing what they will learn.
7. **Evaluation:** Assessing whether the learning objectives have been achieved, providing feedback for curriculum improvement. In the final stage of curriculum development, Taba emphasizes the importance of evaluating learners' work. Teachers use evaluation to gauge progress towards the objectives, while learners are expected to assess what they have learned. According to Taba, evaluation is not limited to pencil and paper, it involves a comprehensive approach. This includes clearly defining the objectives to depict learners behaviors, creating diverse methods for evaluating learners, summarizing the evaluation or evidence, and utilizing the information obtained from these assessments (Taba, 1962: 313).

Taba (1962) further emphasised that the curriculum should be student-centred and focus on the needs and interests of learners. She considered that the curriculum should be dynamic and responsive to the changing needs and contexts of students and developed through a participatory and democratic process involving all relevant stakeholders (Taba, 1962: 309).

When teachers engage in curriculum development, it is easier to identify the needs of learners since the teacher is actively involved and interacting with the content and the learners. In this way, the curriculum is based on learners' real needs and design to proactively address these needs while anticipating future trends. Taba's curriculum development model is an example of an inductive approach to curriculum development that begins with the specifics and builds on the overall design. Taba believes that curriculum planning should have a clear and defined order and that

teachers should be involved in the process. She believes that curricula should be developed or designed by teachers, rather than imposed by a higher authority (Smith, 2013). She believes that teachers should start the process by creating teaching and learning units for their learners in schools, rather than creating a general curriculum first. This can result in a high achievement rate in learner performance.

Although this model was introduced in the 1960s, it has contributed to shaping curriculum design worldwide (Carl, 2009). It further captures different background influences that allow a down-top approach to curriculum design and development. Portillo et al. (2020) highlight the adaptability and relevance of the Taba Curriculum Model across different educational settings, reinforcing its practical and evidence-based nature. Taba's approach continues to influence modern curriculum development, underscoring the importance of involving educators in designing curricula that are responsive to student needs.

## **2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The literature review underscores the complex interplay between curriculum reforms and teacher development in the context of South Africa's educational landscape. Despite significant efforts to standardise and improve educational quality through frameworks like the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), challenges persist in effectively implementing these curricula. Key issues include insufficient teacher training, inadequate resources, and the need for contextually relevant professional development.

Theoretical perspectives, such as Lewin's Change Theory, offer valuable insights into the dynamics of curriculum implementation and the role of teacher development. They highlight the importance of aligning curriculum goals with teachers' professional knowledge and contextual factors to achieve successful implementation. Furthermore, the role of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in supporting teacher development and fostering collaborative learning environments emerges as a promising approach to addressing some of these challenges.

In addition to Lewin's framework, Taba's Curriculum Theory provides a favourable model for this study and it plays a critical role in shaping the approach to curriculum development. Developed by Hilda Taba, this theory advocates for a systematic, teacher-centred approach to curriculum design. Taba emphasised the importance of teacher involvement in curriculum development, arguing that those closest to the learners are best positioned to design curricula that meet their specific needs. This bottom-up approach contrasts with top-down models, where administrators or policymakers dictate the curriculum without sufficient input from teachers. By involving teachers directly in the development process, Taba's theory ensures that the curriculum is more responsive to student needs and more likely to be successfully implemented in the classroom.

The review suggests that addressing the gap between curriculum reforms and classroom practices requires a multifaceted strategy. This includes enhancing the quality and relevance of professional development programs, improving resource allocation, and fostering collaborative networks among educators. By focusing on these areas, policymakers and educational leaders can better support teachers and improve the overall effectiveness of curriculum reforms.

In summary, while curriculum reforms in South Africa aim to improve educational outcomes, their success is contingent upon effective implementation supported by robust teacher development. Taba's Curriculum Theory was favourable for this study as it plays a critical role in shaping the approach to curriculum development. The insights gained from this literature review will inform the subsequent research, aiming to identify strategies for bridging the gap between curriculum policies and classroom practices, ultimately contributing to enhanced educational quality.

This chapter reviewed literature on the significant role of teacher involvement in curriculum development. It discussed the impact of teacher participation on curriculum effectiveness, job satisfaction, and learner outcomes, advocating for a collaborative approach to curriculum design. The methodologies and further implications of these findings are explored in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the scientific literature and theoretical framework behind the study. It was also noted that teacher involvement in curriculum development in South Africa and elsewhere in the world is limited to curriculum developers, excluding teachers. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology. It presents the research design, paradigm, and approach, and then discusses the research methods, including data collection and analysis, research trustworthiness and finally ethical considerations. The following diagram gives a bird's view of this chapter (Figure 3.1).

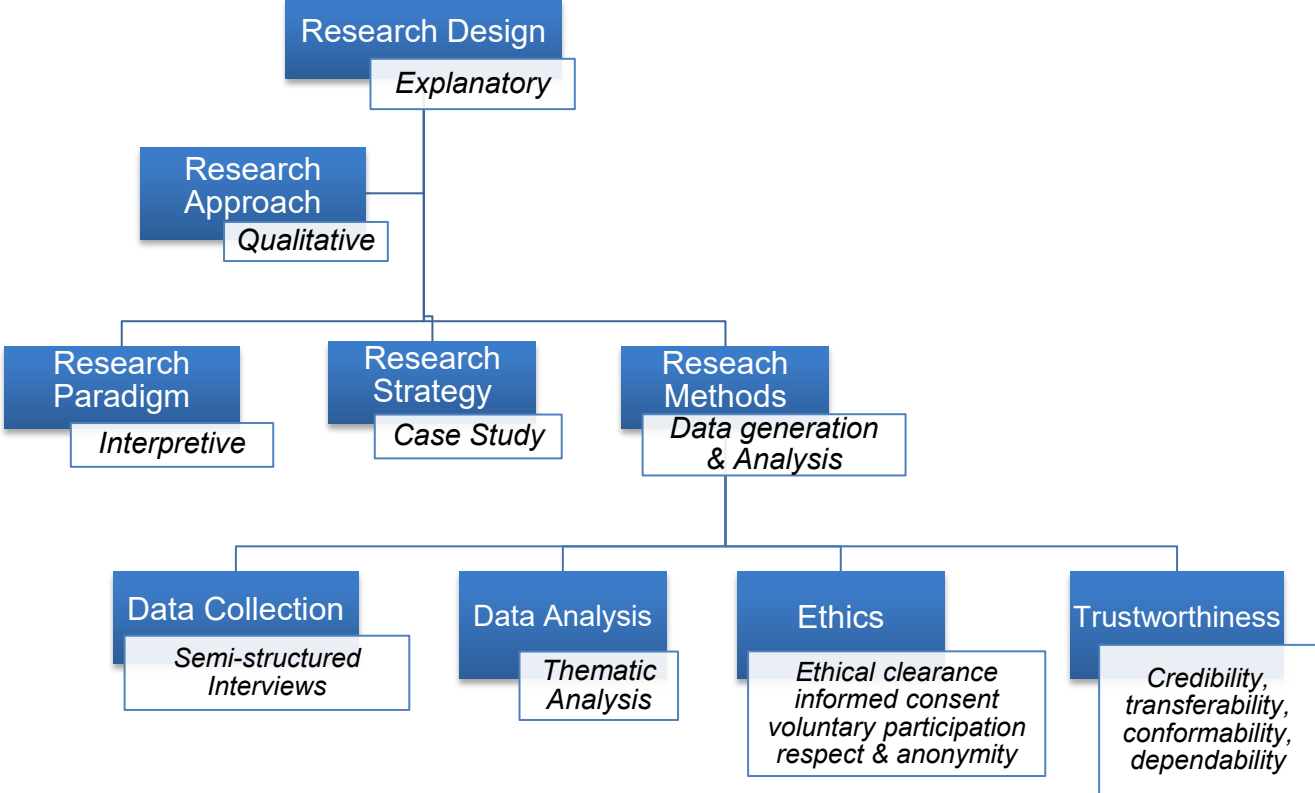


Figure 3.1 Chapter overview



### **3.2. RATIONALE FOR THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

The rationale for conducting empirical research is to provide a solid foundation of evidence-based findings that can inform and enhance our understanding of a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Yin, 2018; Babbie, 2020). The rationale for this empirical inquiry stems from the need to understand the specific contributions of teachers in curriculum development within the unique socio-economic and cultural context of Mpumalanga Province in a developing country such as South Africa. By examining teachers' experiences and perspectives, the study aimed to uncover factors influencing curriculum success and provide recommendations for improving teacher support in the context of on-going educational reforms. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing strategies that enhance teacher development and curriculum implementation.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Grey (2014) identifies three possible forms of research design: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. The study used an explanatory case study to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of teachers in curriculum development in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. According to Creswell (2015), a case study is an empirical study that examines a current phenomenon in its actual context, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident and where multiple evidence is used. The research design specifies the process for the data required, the methods used to collect and analyse that data, and how all of this will answer the research questions (Grey, 2014).

According to Grey (2014), explanatory studies attempt to ask 'why' and 'how' questions and descriptive research tends to ask 'what' questions. On the other hand, exploratory research is conducted when little is known about a phenomenon and there is a problem that is not clearly defined (Saunders et al., 2012). This study followed explanatory research that examines teachers' lived experiences and how these affect their everyday lives. The following sections present the paradigm, approach and methods used for data generation and analysis.

### **3.3.1 Research Paradigm**

Research paradigm constitutes the understanding that research will uphold, and is guided by the assumptions, beliefs, norms, and values of the chosen paradigm (Held, 2019). These principles shape how a researcher sees, interprets, and acts within the world. These are the conceptual lenses through which the researcher examines the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods used and how the data will be analysed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). The interpretive paradigm was the foundation of the study. This study used an interpretive paradigm to examine the role of teachers in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province. This perspective is typically seen as an approach suited to qualitative research and is often combined with constructivism (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Creswell and Creswell (2017) suggest the purpose of the interpretivist approach is to understand and describe meaningful social action in a dialogic discourse. Modise (2022) asserts that the nature of communication in interpretivist paradigms is transactional, making it suitable for interviews.

The interpretive paradigm holds that interacting with participants in natural settings advocates a socially constructed reality and can result in obtaining opinions, perceptions, and experiences about a specific phenomenon (Ryan, 2018). This indicates that the root of the interpretive paradigm falls in the understanding that teaching and learning is a process of making meaning through interaction. The classroom, as a broader context and the curriculum, which is viewed as an ongoing process, where interaction is shaped between the teacher and the learner. This study means that the researcher sought to understand the interaction and process of teachers' involvement in curriculum design and development and how their interaction with learners can help improve the curriculum and learner performance. The interpretive paradigm enabled me to generate information collaboratively to understand the members' meaning of their perceptions, opinions, and experience (Cooke, 2018). The research paradigm consists of three components, and they are:

#### ***Ontological perspective***

Ontology, as defined by Saunders et al. (2019:133), concerns assumptions about the nature of reality. In this study, the research philosophy aligns with interpretivism. This approach is founded on the belief that reality is socially constructed and that

understanding the subjective experiences and meanings of individuals is essential for gaining insights into complex social phenomena. The choice of interpretivism reflects an ontological assumption that reality is not a singular, objective entity but rather a collection of multiple realities shaped by individual experiences and social contexts.

### ***Epistemology perspective***

Epistemology refers to assumptions about knowledge, including what is considered acceptable, valid, and legitimate, and how knowledge is communicated (Saunders et al., 2019:133). Epistemologically, this study adopts the view that knowledge is co-constructed through interactions with participants. Instead of aiming to uncover a singular truth, the research seeks to explore the diverse perspectives of teachers on curriculum implementation and professional development. The interpretivist philosophy supports the use of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, to capture these nuanced experiences and to generate rich, context-specific insights.

### ***Methodological perspective***

The concept 'methodology' is widely employed to encompass the research framework, techniques, strategies, and procedures employed in a research study, as stated by Khatri (2020:6). Creswell and Creswell (2018) also state that methodology involves the collection of data, the selection of appropriate tools, their utilisation, and the analysis of the gathered data. The role of teachers in shaping the curriculum in Siyabuswa Circuit, Mpumalanga Province was explored using a qualitative perspective, interviews, and thematic analysis.

### **3.3.2 Research Approach**

This research followed a qualitative approach which falls within the interpretive paradigm. The qualitative approach examines attitudes, habits, and expectations through participants' in-depth inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017:17). In this study, I attempted to explore the participants' viewpoints to explain the phenomenon. I did so by considering teachers' perspectives regarding their roles in curriculum creation and the context of their participation. According to Holloway and Galvin (2017:03) qualitative investigation as a research method typically performed in a natural environment uses the investigator as the significant utensil in fact-gathering and

analysis. A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to observe teachers in their natural settings and learn how they interpret the curriculum to plan their daily classes.

Qualitative research prefers a “flexible open-ended and less formal research approach that allows for changes as required by the study” (Creswell, 2018). It helped me to institute a complete account of teachers' views in the individual schools regarding the reasons for the essence of the role of participation in the creation of curriculums. The qualitative approach allowed the chance to witness the educators in their everyday settings and get precisely what is happening in their classrooms (Creswell, 2018). The primary and secondary data was better understood on how the Education Department interprets teachers' involvement in curriculum creation. Collecting and analysing data in qualitative research may be more time-consuming as it uses several data instruments, including interviews, surveys, and questionnaires, requiring analysing to better understand human awareness.

The qualitative research findings of the study cannot always be applied to a broader population spectrum, with equivalent assurance excluded from quantitative analysis. However, this study focused on the Province of Mpumalanga, hoping that the findings will help improve the quality of education in the Province, and initiate similar studies in other provinces and, ultimately, contribute towards the continued improvement of the South African education system.

### **3.3.3 Research Strategy**

Research strategy is a researcher's guidance and guidelines (Yin, 2013). The researcher should then follow these guidelines to answer the research questions and resolve the problem under review (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). For this research, the study followed a case study. A case study is an important source of information either to complement other types of information or to stand alone and prepare your approach to research (Cohen et al., 2019:375). Haradhan (2018:11) describes a case study as a holistic study of people or a group of people. The case study research helped me gain an in-depth understanding of the role of teachers in curriculum development within a real-life context. Hay and Wood (2011) suggest researchers leading qualitative research aim to apprehend the phenomenon through the perceptiveness of those who require direct instant contact with the phenomenon through the eyes of

others. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2013) define a case study as “studying a concept in the sense of real life”.

According to Harrison et al. (2017:6), in a qualitative case study we can use many data sources and approaches. The main purpose of case studies is to thoroughly explore a topic from the perspective of the participants. In this analysis, the case to be studied was the participation of teachers in creating the curriculum. The benefit of expanding a case study is that it offers the investigator the prospect of participating in further in-depth dialogues and offers a prospect for intensive interrogation of specific details frequently ignored by other approaches. A case study enables the investigation and understanding of complex issues. It is a reliable research method, especially when deep and thorough research is required. A case study examines a limited system or case over time using the various sources of information available in that situation. All the collected information was combined to give the most effective answers to the research phenomenon.

### **3.4. RESEARCH METHODS**

Bryman (2016:40) states that research methods are the tools and procedures used by the researcher to collect and analyse data. Research methods are used to collect and interpret the evidence needed to answer the research questions posed for the study. In this section, the researcher deals with the selection of participants, data collection and data analysis. Research methods for a particular project may include interviews, observations, or textual data collection. For this study, interviews were deemed relevant and appropriate.

#### **3.4.1 Selection of Participants**

The quality of research heavily depends on the appropriateness of the sampling method used (Cohen et al., 2018:202). Therefore, researchers must carefully select their sample to ensure the trustworthiness of their findings. Lack of important resources and accessibility often constraint data collection, especially from populations from rural areas. As a result, to understand the characteristics of the community like Siyabuswa Circuit in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa, Manion et al. (2018) indicate that researchers need to carefully collect data from a smaller, representative segment of the population.

### **3.4.2 Sampling Techniques**

Purposeful sampling was used to choose the research locations and participants to increase understanding of the phenomenon under study (Maree, 2020). Martella, Nelson, Morgan, Marchard and Martella (2013:305) define purposive sampling as “selecting individuals deliberately, events or settings for the important information they provide”. Purpose sampling made it manageable to access the relevant participants for this research. This created an opportunity for the researcher to interact with the relevant persons with valuable contributions to the research questions. Samples were drawn from populations. According to Pandey and Pandey (2015:13) “the population includes an aggregate collection of all research subjects that researchers want to draw concrete conclusions from”. Schutte and Steyn (2015:25) states that the collection of the objective population is complete based on their suitability for the analysis and clear requirements for addition or elimination.

### **3.4.3 Selection Procedure used for Participants**

The school population in Siyabuswa Circuit is composed of thirty-two (32) schools, all of which have the potential to be included in the study. Due to the high number of schools in the Siyabuswa District and the limited time available for the study, the researcher concentrated on four schools. I selected two to four teachers per school, specifically those at Post Level 1 (PL1) and Post Level 3 (PL3) Subject Heads. These teachers have between four and fifteen years of teaching experience, and are involved in professional teacher education in the pastoral and rural areas of Siyabuswa District. The following ten (10) participants who fitted the selection criteria, and were available and willing to participate in this study were invited:

- Teachers who had been in the education system for four years (4), including subjects heads of departments who have been responsible for translating the syllabi for more than five years (2) were identified,
- Principals of the selected schools (2) from a primary school and one from a secondary were asked to participate in the study,
- Circuit representative (1) who has experience with the curriculum was selected from the district, and

- Mpumalanga Department of Education representative (1) who has indepth knowledge of the curriculum and curriculum changes and of how the curriculum is created added more insight to the research study.

#### **3.4.4 Data Collection**

This section provides an account of the data collection process and the research instruments utilised to gather the data. Creswell and Creswell (2018:26) define data collection as the methodical and precise gathering of data that pertains to the research sub-problems.

##### ***Semi-structured Interviews***

Interviews are described as purpose-based discussion (Roulston, 2014:304). Roulston also insists that interviews are dialogues that take place between the storytelling participants and the storytelling investigator. Both the design and interviewer's qualifications determine the quality of data collected during an interview. During the interview process, according to participants' responses to their first questions, follow up questions were often asked by the researcher. Jamshed (2014) states that "semi- structured interviews are where the respondents get to reply pre-set, open-ended questions, and in this way, they are broadly utilized by experts in about".

A semi-structured interview also involves a conversation between two people, a participant and a researcher, that follows interview guidelines with follow-up questions and responses (Dejonckheere & Vaugh, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were used, characterised by open-ended questions. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they allow the researcher to probe for more clarity and note nonverbal communication. The interviews took place at each selected school for thirty minutes for each participant. A tape recorder was used to record the interviews. Where participants could not meet for face-to-face interviews, ZOOM was used to collect data; the recording tools were used. The recordings were later transcribed for further interpretation and analysis. The interview schedule (Annexure 4) is attached.

### 3.4.5 Data Analysis

Alhojailan (2012: 37) states that data analysis is central to reliable qualitative research. The primary data obtained was unpacked using thematic analysis to make sense of it. Clarke and Braun's (2006, 2017) thematic analysis (TA) which is defined as a method used to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns of meaning, or themes within qualitative data, was used to make sense of the data in this study. Clarke and Braun's (2006, 2017) thematic analysis involves the following six steps which helped to make sense of the data.

**Step 1 - Familiarisation with the Data:** I immersed myself in the data to get a thorough understanding, which included reading and re-reading the data and noting down my initial ideas as guided by Clarke and Braun's (2006, 2017) work on thematic analysis.

**Step 2 - Generating Initial Codes:** I systematically coded interesting features of the data across the entire dataset and collated data relevant to each code. I then categorised the codes based on their similarities and the issues they addressed. Codes were identified and selected by circling, highlighting, and underlining significant words, phrases, and paragraphs (quotes or passages) that stood out and those that were recurring throughout the dataset (Modise, 2016; Creswell, 2018) (Table 4.2).

**Step 3 - Searching for Themes:** Categorisation of codes helped me to collate them into potential themes and I gathered all participants' comments relevant to each potential theme.

**Step 4 - Reviewing Themes:** I checked if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire dataset, generating a thematic map of the analysis as illustrated in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. I was able to review details and uncover common patterns and opinions from all the participants. Collected data was coded and arranged into categories (Alhojailan, 2012). Themes were identified as they emerged. The information was organised according to the research study's questions and objectives.



**Step 5 - Defining and Naming Themes:** I conducted ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis told, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

**Step 6 -Writing Up:** I took the final opportunity for analysis, which included weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell a coherent and persuasive story about the data, as presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Clarke and Braun's (2017) steps provide a structured approach to analysing qualitative data, ensuring a thorough and systematic examination of the data especially for novice researchers. The thematic analysis helped in understanding the experiences of participants and how they create meaning, reinforcing the voices of the participants and research individuals in their natural contexts (Bless, Higson, Smith, & Sithole, 2013). I focused on presenting clear inductive explanations and analysis of the role of teachers involved in curriculum development and how the Department of Education interprets the participation of instructors in syllabus development at schools in South Africa, Mpumalanga Province.

### **3.5. MEASUREMENTS FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS**

In research methodology, ensuring trustworthiness and rigor is crucial for maintaining the integrity and validity of the study. According to Yin (2020), four key criteria contribute to achieving trustworthiness and rigor: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. The researcher must continuously tackle significant methodological challenges to add trustworthiness and consistency to the research. Thus, it is important to stick to the following trustworthiness requirements:

According to Zikmund (2015), *credibility* refers to “the concept of internal consistency, along with how we ensure rigour in the research process and how we communicate that we have done so to others”. Ascertaining a reliable account of each participant's sense of reality refers to using numerous data sources and researchers in the data generation process. To enhance credibility, the study employed several strategies, including member checks, where participants reviewed and verified the accuracy of their responses and interpretations. Additionally, the use of a semi-structured interview guide allowed for consistent data collection while providing flexibility to explore emerging themes in depth. Triangulation of data sources, through interviews

with multiple participants, also contributed to the credibility of the findings by providing a more comprehensive view of the research problem. The participants were not forced to participate in the study; they participated of their own free will. The participants were called and assure that their names will not be mentioned in the study. Their personal information was protected according to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) 2013.

*Transferability* is the degree towards which the results of the enquiry can be transferred to another context. Bless, HigsonSmith & Sithole (2013) substantiate that the research study results may not be applied to a comparable situation from a different context or event. The study focused on schools in Siyabuswa Circuit in rural areas involving selected teachers, principals, circuit representatives and a Mpumalanga Department of Education representative whose views, perspectives and viewpoints do not automatically represent schools in other provinces. Therefore, the findings of this research may not be generalisable to other environments. The research aimed to give the reader a thorough overview of the role of teachers in the curriculum development.

*Conformability* as a qualitative reliability criterion guarantees “that the study results exist the invention of the enquiry effort besides the preference of the researchers” (Mufanechiya, 2015; 77). Conformability should occur when a study has achieved transferability and dependability. The researcher presented the produced data and interpretations as closely as possible to the participants’ real words using ordinary, concrete language, and member-checking (Taherdoost, 2016). An audit trail helped achieve transparency in presenting a clear account of the analysis process through thorough documentation of the tools and techniques used in the decisions. Annexure 2 shows a sample of the interview with one of the participants. This information is also available on request. This and the guidance of my study’s supervisor added to the proposed study’s depth and trustworthiness.

With regard to *dependability* in this study, trustworthiness and reliable techniques for data collection were employed, specifically document analysis and interviews. Mafenya (2016; 128) asserts that dependability is what establishes whether the outcomes are trustworthy and credible. The data was stored by the researcher on a

USB drive. The interview notes were scanned and electronically saved on a laptop computer in a folder with all the other material.

### **3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations are fundamental in research as they govern the standards of conduct concerning the rights and welfare of participants. According to Saunders et al. (2019:253), ethics encompass the standards of behaviour that guide researchers in their interactions with research subjects and others affected by the research. These ethical standards are influenced by broader social norms as well as the specific context of the study. In this study, several key ethical principles were adhered to, including the following:

#### **Ethical clearance and permission to conduct research at the schools**

The researcher did seek permission and obtain ethical clearance to conduct the study from the University of South Africa (Ref: 2023/11/08/58321373/03/AM). Approval from the Siyabuswa circuit, and letters of permission from the heads of the partaking schools and Mpumalanga Province Basic Education Department were also obtained. The selected schools for the study were informed through a letter from the Provincial Head of Department that the researcher would be granted permission to conduct the research.

#### ***Informed consent***

Throughout the analysis, the participants in the study were made aware of the study's intent. Du PlooyCilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhout (2014:262-268) argue that respect for participants implies acceptance of the right to be aware of the existence and implications of a study, the right to determine whether to take part in the proposed research and the right to discontinue at any time. Mills, Durepos, Wiebe, Lui and Maitlis (2010:22) describe discretion as conserving evidence collected throughout the research study. Authorisation was required to use a recording device in interviews, and after completion of the analysis, the audio recordings were deleted to protect participants. Participants were only interviewed after they had given their consent.

### ***Confidentiality and anonymity***

The confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the research. Personal identifiers were removed from the data, and information was stored securely to protect participants' privacy. Anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms in reporting and analysis, thereby safeguarding participants from potential repercussions (Olsen, 2022:1).

### ***Voluntary participation***

Participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study, including its purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any negative consequences. This provision ensured that participation was voluntary and that participants felt comfortable and uncoerced (Babbie, 2016:36). By addressing these ethical considerations, the study aimed to uphold high standards of research conduct, ensuring that the rights and welfare of participants were protected throughout the research process. It was important that the participants freely participated without being coerced or manipulated, as that could affect the quality and authenticity of their views and/or of the data generated.

## **3.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In summary, the research methodology provided a comprehensive framework for investigating the role of teachers in curriculum development within Mpumalanga Province. Grounded in an interpretivist philosophy, the study explored participants' subjective experiences and perceptions through a case study strategy involving four schools and semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed for an in-depth examination of curriculum implementation and teacher development.

Purposive sampling targeted specific educators to gather relevant data. Measures to eliminate bias included establishing rapport and engaging in reflexivity. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability, while ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were meticulously followed.

Overall, the methodology aimed to provide robust, reliable, and contextually rich insights into the impact of teacher development on curriculum implementation,

contributing valuable findings to inform educational practices and policies. Chapter 4 will present the study's results, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION**

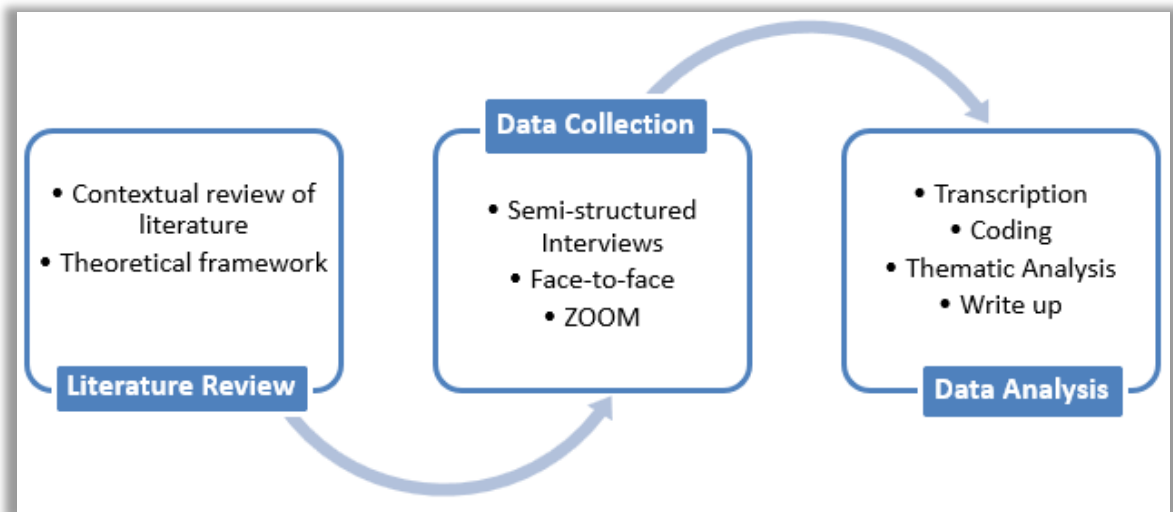
### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 3 covered processes, ethical consideration, and data gathering methods, data analysis techniques, and research instruments used in this study. This chapter presents the results of the study, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the findings in Chapter 5. The data gathered from interviews was analysed to address the main research question: “What is the role of teachers in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province?” The findings are organised according to the themes derived from the research questions, providing a structured approach to understanding the role of teachers in curriculum development. To achieve the study’s objectives, the findings are presented according to the following sub-questions:

1. How can teachers participate in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa?
2. What are the implications of teacher involvement in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa?
3. What are the recommendations for effective teachers’ involvement in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province?

### **4.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

The following diagram (Figure 4.1) illustrates the process and instruments used in this study to generate and analyse the data. Review of relevant literature and the theoretical framework assisted in understanding the contextual issues in the country and the province. This also helped with the research interview questions during the data collection stage and analysing the data.



**Figure 4.1.** Overview of the research process

The study was conducted in four schools in Siyabuswa Circuit, comprising two secondary and two primary schools. The researcher resided in the same ward as these schools, which facilitated a smooth and relatively problem-free research process. Aware that some participants might feel compelled to protect the school's image and avoid negative feedback, the researcher focused on building trust, ensuring confidentiality, and emphasising the importance of honest responses.

To maintain confidentiality, the names of participants and schools were omitted from the research discussion. The interview questions were derived from the research questions (Annexure 3) and literature review. As mentioned in Chapter 3, data analysis followed Clarke and Braun's (2006, 2017) thematic analysis steps, which helped in identifying codes, categories, and themes.

### **4.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Manion et al. (2018) data analysis involves summarising and interpreting gathered data using logical and analytical reasoning to identify patterns or trends. Analysing data is an activity that permeates all stages of a qualitative research study (Modise, 2016; Timmermans & Tavory, 2022). As illustrated in Figure 4.1, data analysis was integrated throughout the stages research, from the literature review, data collection, and ultimately the interpretation phase. Also indicated in Chapter 3, Clarke, and Braun's (2006, 2017) thematic analysis (TA) was used to

makes sense of the data in this study. This section presents the data analysis process, together with codes and themes, from the interaction with the participants.

### 4.3.1 Participants' Demographic Information

After receiving ethical clearance to conduct research from the University of South Africa, and permission from the school, district and DBE in the province, the participants were approached and requested to participate. Table 4.1 presents the demographic information of the participants who consented to take part in the study and completed the consent forms prior to the interviews. Ten participants were sampled and interviewed as shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. Biographical information of participants**

Participants	Gender	Age	School/ District	Qualification	Number of years in the position
Teacher 1A	M	28	Secondary School A	Bachelor of Education	5
Teacher 2A	F	32	Primary School A	Bachelor of Education	4
Teacher 3B	F	32	Primary School B	Bachelor of Education	8
Teacher 4B	M	30	Secondary School B	Bachelor of Education	5
HOD 1	M	30	Primary School C	Bachelor of Honours in Education	8
HOD 2	F	59	Secondary School B	Bachelor of Honours in Education	10
Principal 1	M	34	Primary School C	Bachelor of Honours in Education & Management Certificate	9
Principal 2	M	59	Secondary School A	Bachelor of Honours in Education & Management Certificate	8
Circuit Representative	M	58	Nkangala District	Bachelor of Honours in Education	12
Provincial Representative	M	54	Nkangala District	Master's Degree	13

As seen in Table 4.1, most teachers possessed substantial teaching experience. Out of ten participants, seven were between 45-54 years old, two were between 35-44, and one participant was aged between 25-34. The predominance of participants in the 45-54 age bracket may suggest that the group consisted of seasoned educators with substantial teaching experience. This group likely possessed a deep understanding of the evolution and impact of curriculum changes over time. Their



insights are likely shaped by extensive classroom experience and a historical perspective on curriculum development. While the smaller number of younger participants may offer fresh perspectives, they might lack the depth of experience found in the older cohort.

Seven participants were female, and three were male. The gender distribution indicates a predominance of female educators in the sample. This might influence the perspectives on curriculum development, potentially reflecting different priorities or experiences compared to their male counterparts. Qualitative exploration could reveal whether gender influences views on curriculum content, teaching methods, or pedagogical strategies.

Nine participants held a bachelor's degree, while one held a master's degree. The prevalence of bachelor's degree holders indicates a standard level of academic qualification among the participants, with limited advanced academic training. This suggests that the insights provided may primarily reflect practical, classroom-based perspectives rather than those shaped by extensive research or theoretical frameworks associated with higher academic qualifications. The presence of a master's degree holder, however, might introduce a slightly more research-oriented perspective to the discussion in the Mpumalanga Province.

Eight participants had 5-10 years of teaching experience, while the rest had less than five years. The majority falling within the 5-10 years' range suggests a group with moderate experience, likely familiar with both the challenges and opportunities of recent curriculum reforms. The inclusion of newer teachers may highlight current challenges and expectations in curriculum development, potentially revealing gaps between recent educational changes and practical classroom experiences.

All participants taught at primary and secondary school level, indicating that the findings would be particularly relevant to the curriculum needs and development for adolescent learners. This focus allowed for an in-depth exploration of the specific challenges and strategies pertinent to secondary education, such as subject specialisation and preparation for post-secondary pathways.

#### 4.4 CODES AND CATEGORIES FROM THE DATA

The table below (4.2) presents the codes and categories from the data. The coding process was thoroughly explained in Chapter 3, which followed Clarke and Braun's (2006, 2017) guidelines. Table 4.2 presents the codes and categories from the data.

**Table 4.2. A sample of codes and categories**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Teacher involvement in curriculum development	Teachers are key stakeholders Curriculum development Teachers are familiar with learning gaps First-hand experience, insights, and expertise Involvement in curriculum Curriculum design Expertise and experience Challenges faced by learners Grass-root level Ground soldiers Stakeholders in education Coordination at each circuit level Teachers as experts Challenges faced by teachers Teamwork
Quality and effectiveness of curriculum development	Expertise and experience Reinforcing the quality of our education system Ensures quality teaching and learning Successfully achieve the school objectives Responsive
Professional development	Continuously development Meet the changing needs of learners Bursaries for teachers Academic knowledge Content-based workshops Prepare teachers for their readiness and smooth

	transitions Expertise and experience Induction programs for new teachers Cluster meetings and workshops Peer development Teamwork
Decision-making and input	Given teachers a chance to input into the curriculum Invited to the seminar and meetings Curriculum policy Provincial level responsibility Circuit office responsibility Teacher involvement Coordination
Challenges	Lack of adequate resources Lack of training and development

Table 4.3 displays the themes and sub-themes derived from the analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews, aligned with the study's research questions. These themes and sub-themes collectively highlight the need for greater teacher involvement in curriculum development to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

**Table 4.3. Generated themes and sub-themes**

Research Questions (RQ)	Themes	Sub-Themes
<b>RQ1:</b> How can teachers participate in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province?	<b>Theme :1</b> Teachers' Involvement in curriculum development	<b>Sub-theme 1.1:</b> Perceptions of teachers regarding their involvement in curriculum development  <b>Sub-theme 1.2:</b> Practical insights from classroom experience - principals' perspectives

		<b>Sub-theme 1.3:</b> Systemic exclusion of teachers from the curriculum development process
<b>RQ2:</b> What are the implications of teacher involvement in Mpumalanga Province's curriculum development?	<b>Theme 2:</b> Challenges in teacher involvement in curriculum development	<b>Sub-theme 2.1:</b> Lack of opportunities to contribute to curriculum development <b>Sub-theme 2.2:</b> Hierarchical structure in curriculum development <b>Sub-theme 2.3:</b> Centralised approach to curriculum development <b>Sub-theme 2.4:</b> Bureaucratic structure of the education system <b>Sub-theme 2.5:</b> Teacher development and training
	<b>Theme 3:</b> The implications of teacher involvement in Mpumalanga Province's curriculum development	<b>Sub-theme 3.1:</b> The potential opportunity for teacher contributions
<b>RQ3:</b> What are the recommendations for effective teacher involvement in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province?	<b>Theme 4:</b> The participants' recommendations for effective teacher involvement in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province	<b>Sub-theme 4.1:</b> Professional growth <b>Sub-theme 4.2:</b> Subject committees and curriculum committees

#### **4.4.1 Theme 1: Teachers' Involvement in Curriculum Development**

This theme focused on the first research sub question, on how teachers can participate in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province. The following sub-themes report the views of the participants on this matter.

##### ***Sub-theme 1.1: Perceptions of teachers regarding their involvement in curriculum development***

Teachers generally felt that they should be more involved in the curriculum development process. Some teachers expressed a desire to contribute their classroom experiences and insights to ensure that the curriculum is practical and responsive to the needs of learners as can be seen with the responses below:

*Teachers are the only ones who go to the classroom. They know how well or not learners respond to new content and how much time is needed to teach a certain topic. (Teacher 2A)*

*Teachers are the only tools that the department has in order to ensure that the curriculum is implemented successfully. Involving them in the curriculum development ensures quality teaching and learning since they are also familiar with the learning gaps and are more equipped with knowledge and skills for addressing them (Teacher 1A)*

The principals and Heads of Departments (HODs) echoed the sentiment that teachers' involvement in the development of the curriculum in the province is important. It was highlighted in the data that there is indeed a need for teachers' input in curriculum design, as they are directly involved in its implementation and can provide valuable feedback on its effectiveness. The Head of Department further commented as follows:

*Teachers are playing a big role in learner's education. As they are the ones who face the challenges more involving the curriculum, so, for the learners to understand their learning areas easy since they use different methods and strategies. (HOD 1)*

*It important to ensure that educators are all involved in the planning and implementation processes and that they participate in all curriculum programs.*

(HOD 2)

*It is very important to involve teachers in curriculum since they are the ones who are implementing it to the learners in class.* (HOD 1)

### ***Sub-theme 1.2: Practical Insights from classroom experience - principals' perspectives***

According to the data, it is clear that the teachers want to contribute their classroom experiences and insights to make the curriculum more practical and responsive to learners' needs. Teachers' desire for greater involvement reflects their awareness of the disconnect between curriculum design and classroom realities. Their on-the-ground experience equips them with valuable insights into what teaching strategies and content are effective or need improvement. This sentiment suggests a potential for increased teacher engagement in curriculum development to bridge gaps between theory and practice. Teachers' practical knowledge can ensure that the curriculum is relevant, engaging, and meets the diverse needs of learners.

*I am a subject head for mathematics and part of the ICT committee. I work closely with the Head of Department to ensure that the curriculum is implemented and improved accordingly. During this pandemic we introduced electronic learning program for teachers and learners. This enforced learning mathematics and other subjects through different technology platform* (Teacher 1).

*Teachers are the only ones who go to the classroom. They know how well or not learners respond to new content and how much time is needed to teach a certain topic* (Teacher 2).

HODs also supported the idea that teachers' involvement is essential in curriculum development. They emphasise the need for teachers' input due to their direct involvement in implementation and their ability to provide valuable feedback on the curriculum's effectiveness. HODs' recognition of the importance of teachers' input highlights a systemic understanding of the curriculum development process. HODs see teachers as integral to refining and improving the curriculum based on their direct interactions with learners and their assessment of the curriculum's impact. Their

support for involving teachers underscores a collaborative approach to curriculum design that values practical insights and iterative feedback.

*Teachers are playing a big role in learners education, as they are the one who face the challenges he/she must be more involve in curriculum. So that the learners can understand their learning areas easy by using different method and strategies (HOD 1)*

Principals also recognised the importance of involving teachers in curriculum development. They noted that teachers, being the ones who implement the curriculum, have a deep understanding of what works and what doesn't. They should be consulted during the development stages to ensure the curriculum is realistic and applicable in the classroom. The participants had this to say:

*It is important that the teachers be involved in the design of the curriculum. They are at the grass-root level and know better of what is needed and relevant. (Principal 2).*

*Teachers are the ones who are directly involved in implementing of curriculum development Teachers play a vital role in their involvement of curriculum. Curriculum will never be effective without their involvement since they are the implementers of curriculum. They are the experts. (Principal 1)*

Principals acknowledge the significance of teachers in the curriculum development process. They note that teachers, as implementers of the curriculum, have a deep understanding of what works and what doesn't, and should be consulted during the development stages. Principals' perspectives align with the recognition that teachers' insights are crucial for creating a curriculum that is both practical and effective. Their acknowledgment of teachers' roles in curriculum development reflects an understanding of the need for a realistic and applicable curriculum. Principals' support for involving teachers suggests a commitment to integrating practical feedback into curriculum design to enhance its relevance and effectiveness.

### ***Sub-theme 1.3: Systemic exclusion of teachers from the curriculum development process***

The Circuit Representative acknowledged that teachers are key stakeholders in the education system. However, they also pointed out that, in practice, teachers are often

excluded from the curriculum development process, which is primarily handled at the national and provincial levels.

*The Circuit Representatives see teachers as key stakeholders but notes that, in practice, they are often excluded from the curriculum development process, which is managed at the national and provincial level. Teachers are never involved in curriculum development whether directly or indirectly. Subject Advisors are said to be representing all teachers in curriculum development. (Circuit Representative)*

The Circuit Representative's observation highlights a disconnection between the recognition of teachers as key stakeholders and their actual involvement in curriculum development. This points to a systemic issue where decision-making about the curriculum is centralised, potentially overlooking the valuable input from those who implement it daily. The exclusion of teachers from the development process may result in a curriculum that lacks practical insights and may not fully address classroom realities.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: The challenges in teacher involvement in curriculum development**

##### ***Sub-theme 2.1: Lack of opportunities to contribute to curriculum development***

Teachers highlighted several challenges, including a lack of opportunities to contribute to curriculum development, insufficient training on curriculum design, and a general feeling that their expertise is underutilised. These challenges reflect a systemic issue where teachers' practical experiences and insights are not adequately leveraged in curriculum development. The lack of opportunities to contribute to the development of curriculum and insufficient training suggests a need for more inclusive and supportive structures that enable teachers to actively participate in designing curricula. This underutilisation of teachers' expertise can result in a curriculum that does not fully address classroom realities or leverage the practical knowledge of those who are directly engaged with learners. The participants commented as follows:

*We don't have any role in curriculum design or development; we only teach what has been prescribed. (Teacher 4 B)*



*I have never been part of any decision making of a particular program, never interested as people from the top do all the tasks. (Teacher 2A)*

### **Sub-theme 2.2: Hierarchical structure in curriculum development**

HODs expressed concerns about the hierarchical nature of curriculum development, where decisions are made at higher levels without adequate consultation with those who have direct classroom experience. Principals also pointed out that the centralised approach to curriculum development limits the ability of schools to adapt the curriculum to local needs and contexts.

*We only implement the curriculum and not its design or development. (Principal 1)*

*At the level of the province, it is the Deputy General who is responsible to involve all stakeholders in curriculum development, however, this is mainly done at the National level where the Director General of education is responsible in involving all provinces and all stakeholders in education. (HOD2)*

The Circuit Representative emphasised that the bureaucratic structure of the education system often hinders effective teacher involvement in curriculum development, as decisions are made at the national level with little input from the grassroots. The Circuit Representative voiced their opinion as follows:

*Teachers are the key stakeholders in education of our learners especially in what is taking place in the classroom on daily basis. My opinion is that they should be coordinated at the level of each circuit where they are given a chance to sponsor inputs in terms of curriculum and their inputs should be submitted per district until the level of the province so that whoever attends the council of education ministers should be able to present inputs by teachers from all levels. (Circuit Representative)*

The hierarchical structure in curriculum development means that those who have first-hand classroom experience—such as HODs—are often excluded from the decision-making process. This disconnect can lead to a curriculum that does not adequately address the practical needs and challenges faced by teachers and learners. HODs' concerns highlight the need for a more collaborative approach that integrates feedback from various levels within the educational system.

### ***Sub-theme 2.3: Centralised approach to curriculum development***

Principals noted that the centralised approach to curriculum development limits schools' ability to adapt the curriculum to local needs and contexts. The centralised curriculum development process can result in a one-size-fits-all approach that may not accommodate local variations and specific needs of different schools or communities.

*We only implement the curriculum and not its design/development (Principal 2).*

Principals' observations point to the need for greater flexibility and adaptability in curriculum design to allow schools to tailor the curriculum to better meet local needs and contexts.

*Teachers play a vital role in their involvement of curriculum. Curriculum will never be effective without their involvement since they are the implementers of curriculum. They are the experts (Principal 1).*

### ***Sub-theme 2.4: Bureaucratic structure of the education system***

The Circuit Representative highlighted the bureaucratic structure of the education system that often hinders effective teacher involvement in curriculum development, with decisions being made at the national level with minimal grassroots input. This was also highlighted by Taba (1962), in her model, where she argues that in developing a school curriculum teachers must formulate hypotheses, collect data, and interpret data to determine what to teach. To fully achieve this goal, teachers must be involved in all aspects of the school curriculum development process. The bureaucratic nature of the education system creates barriers to meaningful teacher involvement by centralising decision-making and limiting opportunities for grassroots feedback. This top-down approach prevents the incorporation of valuable insights from those who are directly engaged in teaching and learning. The Circuit Representative's emphasis on this issue underscores the need for systemic reforms that allow for more decentralised and inclusive curriculum development processes.

*“Teachers can serve on curriculum committees tasked with designing, reviewing, and revising curriculum documents. Providing feedback on proposed curriculum materials, including textbooks, lesson plans, and assessment tools. Teachers can*

*also collaborate with curriculum designers, instructional specialists, and subject matter experts to develop curriculum content, resources, and instructional strategies” (Circuit Representative).*

The challenges identified across different stakeholder perspectives highlight significant barriers to effective teacher involvement in curriculum development. Addressing these challenges requires a systemic shift towards more inclusive and flexible curriculum development processes. This could involve creating more opportunities for teachers to contribute, enhancing training on curriculum design, and decentralising decision-making to incorporate local and practical insights into curriculum development.

The findings indicate that, while there is widespread recognition of the importance of involving teachers in curriculum development, their actual involvement is limited to none. The current top-down approach to curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province restricts the opportunities for teachers to contribute their expertise and insights.

### ***Sub-theme 2.5: Teacher development and training***

Most teachers reported limited or no involvement in the actual curriculum development process. Their role is often confined to implementing the curriculum designed by higher authorities. However, some teachers have participated in workshops and cluster meetings where they could share their opinions, although these opportunities were not sufficient for a meaningful contribution. Teacher development and teacher training have been identified as the most significant teacher empowerment standards. The following quotes captured some of the responses of the participants:

*Teachers should be involved by furthering their education as lifelong learners and by participating in professional bodies of the school or those within the education system. (Teacher, 1A)*

*Teachers can participate in professional development workshops, seminars, and training sessions focused on curriculum development principles, strategies, and best practices. (Provincial Representative)*

Principals stated that while they facilitate discussions about curriculum implementation at their schools, their involvement in its development is usually limited to attending workshops or meetings organised by the Department of Education.

*They should be invited to the seminar and meetings that they deal with the development so that they also give inputs about related information. (Principal, 2)*

The limited involvement of teachers in curriculum development suggests a disconnect between those who design the curriculum and those who implement it. Although teachers may have opportunities to provide feedback through workshops or meetings, these forums are described as insufficient for meaningful contributions. This lack of substantial involvement can lead to a curriculum that may not fully address the practical challenges and needs encountered in the classroom. The gap between teachers' practical experiences and curriculum design could affect the curriculum's relevance and effectiveness.

While HODs play a critical role in managing the curriculum's execution and providing feedback on its application as educators, their lack of direct involvement in its development means that their insights and experiences are not incorporated into the initial design. This could impact the alignment between curriculum expectations and practical implementation challenges.

Principals' involvement in curriculum development is largely indirect, focusing on facilitating its implementation and attending external meetings. This limited engagement in the actual development process suggests that principals may not have sufficient input into the initial design of the curriculum, which could affect its practical applicability and alignment with the needs of their schools. Their role in implementation is crucial but does not encompass the broader development aspects that could benefit from their perspective.

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3: The implications of teacher involvement in Mpumalanga Province's curriculum development**

##### ***Sub-theme 3.1: The potential opportunity for teacher contributions***

The Circuit Representative acknowledged that, while teachers should ideally be involved in curriculum development, this is rarely the case. The process is predominantly top-down, with limited input from those who will implement the curriculum. This is what the participants had to say:

*Teachers are the key-implementers of the curriculum, and they understand it better as they are exposed to the working environment (Teacher 1A)*

*Teachers should be involved by being given a chance to be involved in deciding what should be taught and to what extent, how much content per grade and how it should follow up in subsequent grades (Teacher 2A)*

*Teachers are playing a big role in learner's education. As the one who face the challenges, he/she must be more involve in curriculum. So that the learners can understand their learning areas easy. Using different method and strategies. (HOD1)*

*It is important that they be involved in the design of the curriculum. They are at the grass-root level and know better of what is needed and relevant. (Principal 2)*

This shows a significant gap between the intended involvement of teachers in curriculum development and their actual participation. Teachers, HODs, and principals are primarily involved in implementing the curriculum rather than shaping it. While teachers have some opportunities to provide feedback through workshops, these are not sufficient for meaningful involvement.

HODs and principals as educators also play critical roles in implementation but they also have limited influence on the development process. The Circuit Representative's perspective highlights the systemic issue of a top-down curriculum development process with insufficient input from those who will implement it.

*Teachers are never involved in curriculum development whether directly or indirectly. Subject Advisors are said to be representing all teachers in curriculum development (Circuit Representative).*

Addressing these gaps by incorporating more substantial feedback and involvement from teachers could enhance the curriculum's relevance and effectiveness, ensuring it better meets the needs of both educators and learners.

#### **4.4.4 Theme 4: The participants' recommendations for effective teachers' involvement in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province**

##### ***Sub-theme 4.1: Professional growth***

Teacher growth and teacher training have been identified as the most significant teacher empowerment standards. The following quotes captured some of the responses of the teachers:

*“Yes... teachers are lifelong learners; they must continue to further their studies to keep abreast with the changes within the curriculum, and also participating in professional bodies of the school or those within the education system” (Teacher, 1).*

*Teachers are familiar with the learning gaps and are more equipped with knowledge and skills for addressing them. This will reinforce quality of our education system and also ensure quality teaching and learning (Provincial Representative).*

*Teachers can offer feedback on proposed curriculum materials, including textbooks, lesson plans, and assessment tools. Teachers can collaborate with curriculum designers, instructional specialists, and subject matter experts to develop curriculum content, resources, and instructional strategies. Teachers can participate in professional development workshops, seminars, and training sessions focused on curriculum development principles, strategies, and best practices. They can engage in action research projects to investigate the effectiveness of curriculum implementation strategies and identify areas for improvement and also pilot new curriculum materials and approaches in their classrooms (Provincial Representative)*

It should be remembered that active involvement of teachers in curriculum development requires successful professional development. Curriculum changes should be also followed by relevant and timely professional development initiatives to give teachers the chance to learn new skills, attitudes and awareness required to confidently introduce any changes. In addition, the focus should be put on using

teachers to perform in-service courses in such a way that they can engage in curriculum preparation and development in different ways.

#### ***Sub-theme 4.2: Subject committees and curriculum committees***

It is noted in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1994) that the subject committee typically consists of university subject experts, representatives of educational colleges, principals of schools, teachers, and others. Within this context, it becomes evident that teachers must be on the subject committee's panel. It is also stated that the tasks of drawing up draft syllabi may be delegated to the subject committee within the main departments, which are then considered by the national department. Responses suggest that certain educators are interested in the subject committees:

*I am a subject head for mathematics and part of the ICT committee. I work closely with the Head of Department to ensure that curriculum is implemented and improved successfully” (Teacher 1 A)*

*They should be organized in cluster per circuit per subject per phase and be allowed to raise issues pertaining to education development and their inputs should be taken serious presented to all role players and implemented as part of change in our education. (Circuit Representative)*

This means that it encourages curriculum creation and creativity in multiple ways due to teacher participation in subject committees and facilitates teacher growth and advancement. This response from the circuit office, on the other hand, suggested a positive affirmation of teachers who have to be active in the creation of curricula. In one of his responses, he also indicated a weakness of the department when it comes to the impact of teachers' involvement in curriculum development.

*Honestly, I cannot speak on their behalf but as a teacher, our participation in curriculum development is not there, ours is just to implement in the classroom (Circuit Representative).*

The participant's indication shows that participation of teachers in subject committees and curriculum committees needs to be improved further so that teachers can explore and exchange further ideas about subjects they teach.

#### **4.5 REVISITING TABA'S MODEL OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

The Taba (1962) is founded on the idea that teachers who teach or implement the curriculum should participate in its development. This reasoning pattern allows the society to participate as practitioners in the process of development (Carl, 2017). Ornstein and Hunkins (2018:39) mentioned that classic development emphasises teacher participation and advocates a bottom-up approach in which the teacher plays an important role. This confirms the frameworks of this study, where schools are social settings, were selected as sample to explore the role of teachers in shaping the curriculum.

The model helped because it allowed teachers to be able to identify the needs of learners, choose relevant content that aligns with the needs of the learners. It allows teacher to organize learning according to the needs of each differentiated methods of learning to fit the needs of learners. The Taba , which emphasises the importance of teacher involvement at various levels (micro - the school), meso - provincial and departmental, and macro - national), supports the idea that teachers should participate in curriculum development. This grassroots approach is seen as essential for creating effective curricula.

The Taba has proven to be beneficial in facilitating teachers' involvement in the curriculum development since they are the ones who implement the curriculum on a daily basis. Teachers are able to understand learners needs and formulate content that aligns with their learning experiences. In other words, for teachers to shape the curriculum, they need to be involved in professional growth, so that they can participate fully in the development and effective implementation of the curriculum. Teachers can also to be involved in curriculum committees provincially and nationally due to the grass-roots approaches to curriculum design. Teachers are eager to participate in curriculum development if they are approached and then involved. They believe they can identify learning goals and learning barriers since they are the ones who know them better.

#### **4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The analysis of teachers' perceptions and actual involvement in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province, Siyabuswa Circuit, reveals a significant gap



between the recognised importance of teachers' roles and their practical involvement. While there is broad acknowledgment of the need for teachers to contribute to curriculum design, their actual participation is limited due to hierarchical and bureaucratic constraints. Teachers face challenges such as a lack of training and underutilised expertise. Heads of Departments (HODs) are concerned about decision-making processes that exclude those with practical classroom experience, and principals see a need for greater curriculum adaptability to local contexts.

Despite recognising the value of integrating practical insights into curriculum development, data shows that systemic barriers hinder effective implementation. Chapter 5 provide a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis of teachers' perceptions, their actual involvement, and the challenges they face in the curriculum development process within Mpumalanga Province.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

As outlined in Chapter 1, the study sought to address specific research questions regarding teacher involvement, the implications of their participation, and recommendations for improving their role in the curriculum development process. This study aimed to explore the role of educators in shaping the curriculum in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. The research objectives for this study were defined as follows:

- To explore how teachers can participate in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province.
- To determine the implications of teacher involvement in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province.
- To provide recommendations for effective teacher participation in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province.

In Chapter 2, the researcher assessed the body of literature regarding the research's title, and the theoretical framework in order to understand the research issue. The chapter touched on different theoretical frameworks to indicate the reason the chosen theory was relevant for this study. The chapter then unpacked the chosen theoretical framework and its importance in the study. The chapter then concluded with a summary.

Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology. The rationale for empirical research, the research approach, entailed the research design, defining the paradigm, population, identifying the sample size and sample techniques, method of data collection, trustworthiness, data analysis and ethical consideration. Chapter 4 presented the themes and findings of the study. Chapter 5 comprises the analysis of the research outcomes, the study's contribution, recommendations to address identified challenges, the recommendations provided to guide policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners in fostering collaboration and a practical

approach to curriculum design. The following section summarises the key findings of the study.

## 5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The goal of this section is to consolidate the outcomes of this research, providing a cohesive understanding of the role of teachers in curriculum development and offering practical solutions for improving their involvement.

### 5.2.1 Key Scholarly Review Findings

The literature review (Chapter 2) provided a synthesis of the research findings from scholarly sources, with the goal of answering the study's research questions. Some key findings highlighted in the literature are as follows:

- **Curriculum reforms and implementation challenges:** The NCS and CAPS aimed to standardise education and improve outcomes but faced challenges in addressing diverse learner needs. C2005 faced issues due to inadequate training and resources, and teachers were excluded from the design process.
- **Design variables in curriculum design:** Key variables in curriculum design include outcomes, content, instructional strategies, technology, data, media, and policy (Dodd, 2021). Annala et al. (2021) identified six forms of agency in curriculum changes, with powerless agency emerging during university-wide changes.
- **Covid-19 Impact:** The pandemic highlighted the need for relevant curriculum content and experiences. Irawati et al. (2022) highlights how countries have tailored policies to address educational disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Effective policymaking ensures curricula remain adaptable and flexible, mitigating learning losses and educational challenges.
- **Teacher Involvement:** Teacher involvement and professional development are crucial for curriculum success, but teachers often have limited roles in development. Ainscow (2020) asserts that promoting equity and inclusion in education requires a philosophical shift and comprehensive changes throughout the education system. This involves fostering an inclusive culture and addressing systemic barriers.

It was also evident that curriculum development frameworks like Lewin's Change Theory and Taba's Curriculum Theory emphasise the need for a collaborative and teacher-centred approach to curriculum design. Lewin's theory provided insight into how teachers can contribute to curriculum reform if they are actively involved in the initial stages, whereas Taba's Model advocated for a bottom-up approach, arguing that teachers' classroom experiences are crucial for creating effective curricula that address learner needs.

Taba's Model of Curriculum Development, a bottom-up approach, advocates for active teacher participation in curriculum design. Taba argues that teachers, being closest to the learners, are in the best position to identify student needs and should, therefore, play a central role in curriculum development. This model emphasises that teachers should be involved at every stage, from diagnosing learner needs to evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum.

### **5.2.2 Key Empirical Findings**

The empirical findings (Chapter 4) highlight that teachers in Mpumalanga Province generally experience limited involvement in curriculum development due to hierarchical and bureaucratic barriers and insufficient support. Teachers, heads of departments (HODs), principals, circuit representatives and provincial representatives indicated that, while their insights are recognised, practical involvement is often restricted by bureaucratic decision-making processes.

Key themes include the disconnect between policy and classroom realities and the lack of training for teachers in curriculum design. The study provided insights into the experiences of teachers, HODs, and educational stakeholders regarding curriculum development in Mpumalanga.

- **Limited Teacher Involvement:** Teachers acknowledged the importance of their role in curriculum development but felt excluded, as decisions were largely made at the national and provincial levels, leaving them frustrated with their lack of input.
- **Bureaucratic Constraints:** Participants alluded to the rigid, top-down approach of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as a barrier to meaningful teacher involvement.

- **Lack of Professional Development:** Participants reported insufficient training in curriculum design, with available development programs focusing more on implementation rather than participation in development.
- **Resource Limitations:** Schools, especially in rural areas, faced resource shortages, limiting their ability to adapt curricula to local contexts.
- **Positive Impact of Teacher Involvement:** Where teachers were involved, they reported greater satisfaction, ownership, and more relevant curricula that addressed learners' needs.

In conclusion, the study highlighted gaps between the ideal and actual teacher involvement, stressing the need for more inclusive processes, and better professional development, and resource allocation.

### **5.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS**

This section addresses the research questions posed in the study and presents the overarching conclusions based on the empirical findings.

#### **5.3.1 How can teachers participate in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province?**

The study found that teachers in Siyabuswa Circuit in Mpumalanga Province have no involvement in curriculum development. Decisions are primarily made at higher levels—national and provincial—leaving teachers as consumers of curriculum rather than contributors. Teachers expressed frustration with this exclusion, particularly when it came to adapting the curriculum to meet the specific needs of their learners and local contexts.

#### **5.3.2 What are the implications and challenges of teacher involvement in Mpumalanga Province's curriculum development?**

Challenges that emerged from the study:

- **Bureaucratic Constraints:** The top-down structure of the curriculum development process restricts teacher involvement.

- **Lack of Professional Development:** Teachers lack the necessary training in curriculum design, which limits their ability to participate meaningfully.
- **Resource Limitations:** Schools, especially in rural areas, face resource shortages, further limiting teachers' ability to contribute to curriculum development.

Implication that emerged from the study:

- Lost opportunities of teachers contributing to the relevant curriculum that speaks to the needs of the learners in the province.
- **Potential Impact:** Involving teachers in curriculum development could significantly improve South Africa's education system.
- These findings in the study underscore the importance of increasing teacher involvement in curriculum development to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- The exclusion of teachers from the development process may result in a curriculum that lacks practical insights and may not fully address classroom realities.
- Teachers as experts can identify and address the needs of the learners they facilitate.
- Stakeholders' involvement in the curriculum development will allow the curriculum to be first developed by the people who have first-hand experience of learners in the classroom both in design and implementation.
- Coordination at each circuit level will allow the curriculum to be effective and efficient.
- Prepare teachers for their readiness and smooth transitions will result in improvement in learner performance.

### **5.3.3 What are the recommendations for effective teachers' involvement in curriculum development at the provincial level in Mpumalanga Province?**

- Teachers can offer feedback on proposed curriculum materials
- Collaboration with curriculum designers

- Importance of teacher input: Teachers' training, qualifications, experience, and knowledge of the curriculum are crucial for effective curriculum development.
- Teacher Involvement: Teachers should be coordinated at the circuit level to provide input on the curriculum, which should be submitted through districts to the provincial level.
- They should be organised in cluster per circuit per subject per phase and be allowed to raise issues pertaining to education development and their inputs should be taken seriously and presented to all role players and implemented as part of change in our education system.
- Participation in curriculum committees: Teachers can serve on curriculum communities tasked with designing, reviewing, and revising curriculum documents.
- Providing feedback; teachers can offer feedback on proposed curriculum materials, including textbooks, lesson plans, and assessment tools.
- Collaboration with curriculum designers: Teachers can collaborate with curriculum designers, instructional specialists, and subject matter experts to develop curriculum content, resources, and instructional strategies.
- Professional development: Teachers can participate in professional development workshops, seminars, and training sessions focused on curriculum development principles, strategies, and best practices.
- Action research: Teachers can engage in action research projects to investigate the effectiveness of curriculum implementation strategies and identify areas for improvement.
- Pilot testing: Teachers can pilot test new curriculum materials and approaches in their classrooms, providing valuable data and feedback for refinement.
- By attending workshops and being the authors of the new ATPS that should be done in schools.
- They should be invited to the seminars and meetings that deal with curriculum development so that they also give inputs about related information.
- They must attend workshops, develop each other and work as a team with clusters.

- They should be involved by furthering their education as lifelong learners and by participating in professional bodies of the school or those within the education system.

## **5.4 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS**

The overarching conclusion is that, while teachers are recognised as crucial to the success of curriculum implementation, they are currently underutilised in the development process. To address this, more inclusive approaches are needed, where teachers are actively engaged in designing and adapting curricula. This will require systemic changes, including better professional development opportunities, decentralisation of curriculum decision-making, and improved resource allocation. The study concludes that empowering teachers to take an active role in curriculum development will result in curricula that are more responsive to the needs of learners and more effectively implemented in diverse educational contexts.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance teacher involvement in curriculum development and address the identified challenges. These recommendations are structured at different levels of governance and institutions to ensure practical application.

### **5.5.1 Recommendations for Governance Level**

- **Establish Teacher Involvement Platforms:** The Department of Basic Education (DBE) should create formal platforms, such as advisory boards, at both national and provincial levels to integrate teachers' input into curriculum development processes. This would ensure that decisions are informed by classroom realities and teacher experiences.
- **Decentralise Curriculum Development:** Curriculum development should be more decentralised to allow for regional and local adaptations. This would empower teachers to tailor curricula to the specific needs of their learners, considering regional contexts, resource availability, and student demographics.



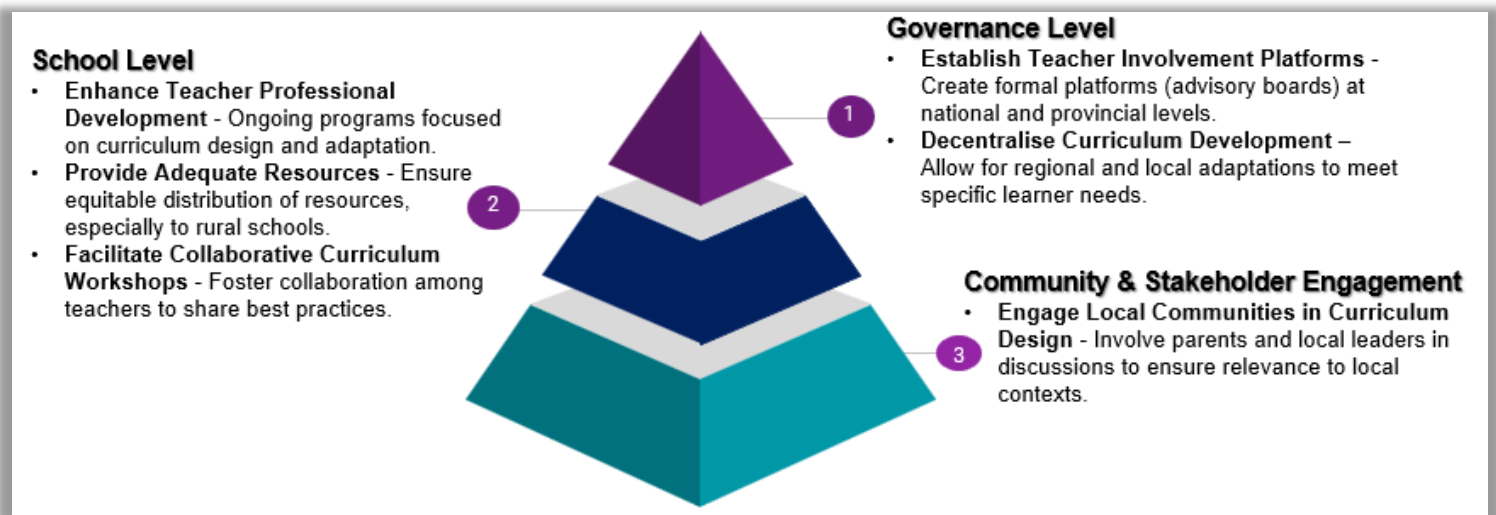
### 5.5.2 Recommendations for School Level

- **Enhance Professional Development:** Schools should prioritise ongoing professional development programs that focus specifically on curriculum design and adaptation. This will equip teachers with the necessary skills to participate more meaningfully in curriculum development and address classroom challenges.
- **Provide Adequate Resources:** The DBE must ensure equitable distribution of resources, particularly to rural schools. Adequate teaching materials and support are essential for teachers to effectively implement and adapt curricula to their teaching environments.
- **Facilitate Collaborative Curriculum Workshops:** Schools should foster collaboration among teachers through curriculum design workshops. These workshops would allow teachers to share best practices, co-create curriculum content, and enhance their involvement in curriculum development.

### 5.5.3 Recommendations for Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- **Engage Local Communities in Curriculum Design:** Schools should engage local communities, including parents and local leaders, in discussions around curriculum adaptation. This would ensure that curricula are relevant to the local cultural and social context, fostering a sense of ownership among both teachers and the community.

The above recommendations are summarised and diagrammatically presented in the figure below (Figure 5.1):



**Figure 5.1.** Recommendations for Enhancing Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development (Summary)

These recommendations are designed to promote more inclusive curriculum development processes by addressing systemic barriers, improving professional development, and fostering collaboration. Implementing these actions will ensure that teachers are more actively involved in shaping curricula, leading to improved educational outcomes.

## 5.6 AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has opened up several avenues for future research that could contribute to a deeper understanding of teacher involvement in curriculum development and the broader education system. The following are key areas that warrant further exploration:

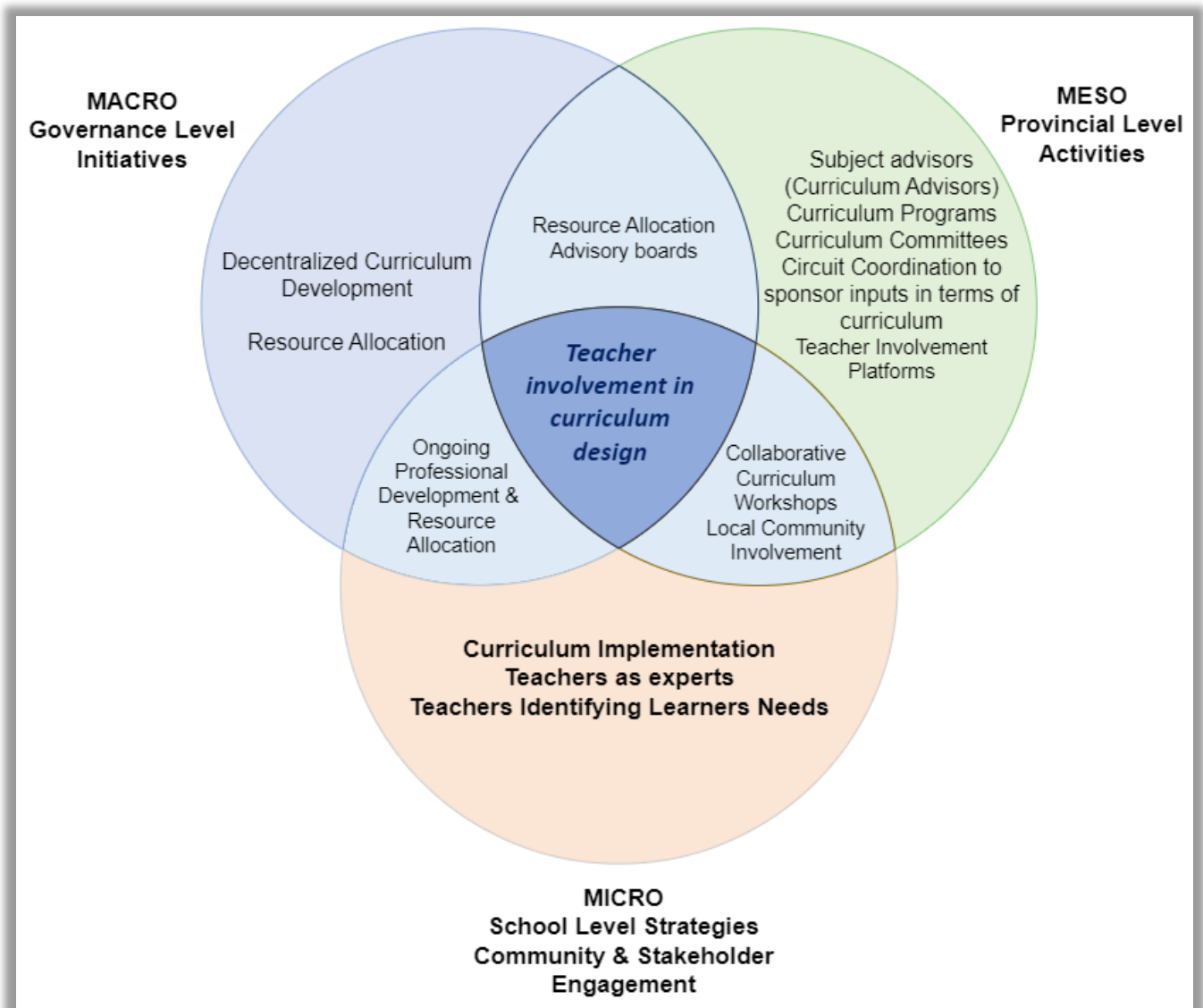
- **Regional Comparisons:** Future research could compare teacher involvement in curriculum development across different provinces in South Africa. This would help to identify regional differences in challenges, resources, and support systems, providing a broader perspective on the factors influencing teacher participation.
- **Impact of Professional Development Programs:** Further studies could investigate the long-term effects of targeted professional development programs on teacher involvement in curriculum design. Research could focus on how ongoing professional development affects teacher empowerment and curriculum outcomes in diverse educational settings.

- **Teacher Involvement in Digital Curriculum Design:** With the increasing shift towards digital education, future research could explore how teachers are involved in designing and adapting digital curricula. This would be particularly useful in understanding how technology can be leveraged to enhance teacher participation in curriculum development.
- **Teacher Involvement in Policy-Making:** Exploring how teachers can be more directly involved in policy-making processes related to curriculum design could provide insights into creating more inclusive decision-making structures. Studies could focus on ways to bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that teachers' voices are heard at all levels of curriculum development.
- **Sustainability of Teacher Contributions:** Research could also explore how to sustain teacher contributions to curriculum development over time. This would involve looking at models of collaborative curriculum development that allow for continuous teacher input and adaptation, ensuring that curricula remain relevant and effective in the long term.

These avenues for future research could further illuminate the challenges and opportunities in enhancing teacher involvement in curriculum development, contributing to more effective and inclusive educational practices.

## **5.7 SUGGESTED MODEL FOR ENHANCING TEACHER INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

The following section presents a suggested Model for Enhancing Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development in the Mpumalanga Province (Figure 5.2). this model is based on the data findings and recommendation of this study.



**Figure 5.2.** Suggested Model for Enhancing Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development in the Mpumalanga Province

The model is briefly explained in the following section.

## 1. GOVERNANCE LEVEL INITIATIVES (MACRO & MESO LEVELS)

### A. Teacher Involvement Platforms

**Objective:** Create formal advisory boards at provincial levels.

**Action Steps:**

- Establish platforms for regular meetings between teachers and policymakers.
- Collect and analyse teacher feedback to inform curriculum decisions.

- Ensure representation from diverse teaching backgrounds to reflect various classroom realities.

## **B. Decentralized Curriculum Development**

**Objective:** Empower teachers to adapt curricula to local needs.

**Action Steps:**

- Develop guidelines for regional adaptations of the curriculum.
- Provide training for teachers on how to modify curricula effectively.
- Encourage collaboration among teachers within regions to share successful adaptations.

## **2. SCHOOL LEVEL STRATEGIES (MICRO LEVEL)**

### **A. Ongoing Professional Development**

**Objective:** Equip teachers with skills for effective curriculum design.

**Action Steps:**

- Implement regular workshops focused on curriculum adaptation and design.
- Offer mentorship programs pairing experienced teachers with those new to curriculum development.
- Evaluate the impact of professional development on teacher engagement and student outcomes.

### **B. Resource Allocation**

**Objective:** Ensure equitable access to teaching materials.

**Action Steps:**

- Conduct assessments to identify resource gaps in schools, especially rural ones.
- Develop a resource distribution plan that prioritises under-resourced schools.
- Create partnerships with organizations to secure additional resources.

### **C. Collaborative Curriculum Workshops**

**Objective:** Foster collaboration among teachers.

**Action Steps:**

- Organize regular curriculum design workshops where teachers can co-create content.
- Facilitate sharing of best practices and innovative teaching strategies.
- Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration to enrich curriculum offerings.

### 3. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

#### A. Local Community Involvement

**Objective:** Engage communities in curriculum design discussions.

**Action Steps:**

- Host community forums to gather input on curriculum relevance and adaptation.
- Involve parents and local leaders in curriculum review committees.
- Develop outreach programs to educate the community about the curriculum and its importance.

### 4. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

- **Timeline:** Create a phased implementation plan with specific milestones for each initiative.
- **Evaluation Metrics:** Establish metrics to assess the effectiveness of each strategy, including teacher satisfaction, student engagement, and community involvement.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement regular feedback loops to gather insights from teachers and stakeholders, allowing for continuous improvement.

This model aims to create a more inclusive and responsive curriculum development process by addressing systemic barriers and enhancing collaboration among teachers, schools, and communities. By implementing these strategies, we can ensure that teachers are actively involved in shaping curricula, leading to improved

educational outcomes for all students. The following section discusses the limitations of this study.

## **5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of teachers in curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province, several limitations should be acknowledged. It focused only on Mpumalanga Province, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other regions in South Africa due to varying educational contexts, resources, and challenges. The small sample size, including teachers, heads of departments (HODs), and circuit representatives, might not capture the full diversity of perspectives within the education sector. A larger, more diverse sample could provide a more comprehensive view. The limited timeframe of the study may have restricted the depth of data collection and analysis. Longer-term studies could reveal more about the sustained impacts of teacher involvement in curriculum development.

The study did not fully account for different school contexts, such as resource availability, teacher training, or administrative support, which can significantly influence teacher involvement in curriculum development. A more detailed examination of these variables would have enriched the findings. These limitations suggest that, while the study provides important insights into teacher involvement in curriculum development, further research is needed to explore these themes more broadly and in different contexts across South Africa.

## **5.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This research journey has been profoundly transformative in terms of academic growth and shaping my understanding of the intricate dynamics within the education system, particularly around curriculum development. The study revealed significant gaps between the theoretical ideals of teacher participation and the practical realities they face in the Siyabuswa Circuit in Mpumalanga Province. Despite these challenges, it is evident that teachers hold invaluable knowledge and insight that could significantly enhance curriculum relevance if they are adequately involved in the process.

Throughout the research process, I have come to appreciate the complexity of educational reform, especially in contexts where resources are limited and hierarchical structures often overshadow the contributions of grassroots-level people. As primary agents of change within classrooms, teachers have a critical role in shaping educational outcomes. Their experiences, challenges, and perspectives provide a wealth of untapped potential for improving curriculum design. However, systemic barriers, such as insufficient professional development and limited resources, hinder their full participation.

Personally, this research has enriched my perspective on the education sector, reinforcing the notion that meaningful reform cannot occur without the involvement of those most closely engaged in the learning process. I have learned that educational policies, while well-intentioned, often fall short when the realities of the classroom do not inform them. This gap between policy and practice underscores the importance of creating mechanisms that enable teachers to actively participate in curriculum development, making the process more inclusive and reflective of classroom needs.

Reflecting on the study, I have also gained a deeper appreciation for the value of collaboration among educators, policymakers, and communities. The research demonstrated that when teachers are given opportunities to contribute, the results are positive—not only for the teachers who feel more empowered but also for the learners who benefit from more contextually relevant curricula. This reinforces the need for systemic reforms prioritising teacher involvement as a fundamental aspect of curriculum development.

In addition to the academic insights gained, this research has been a personal journey of growth. It has challenged me to think critically about the barriers within the education system and explore practical and sustainable solutions. Moreover, it has solidified my commitment to advocating for a more inclusive and teacher-centred approach to education reform. I hope that the findings and recommendations presented in this study will serve as a catalyst for further discussion and action, ultimately leading to an education system that better serves both teachers and learners.

This study has been a significant milestone, marking the conclusion of a research project and the beginning of a deeper, lifelong engagement with education and policy



reform. As I reflect on the process, I feel a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment, knowing that this work has the potential to contribute to meaningful change. It is my hope that this research will inspire others to continue exploring the vital role of teachers in shaping the future of education, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their contributions recognised.

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## ANNEXURES

### ANNEXURE 1: ETHICS CERTIFICATE



#### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/11/08

Ref: **2023/11/08/58321373/03/AM**

Name: Ms KN SKOSANA

Student No.:58321373

Dear Ms KN SKOSANA

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2023/11/08 to 2026/11/08

**Researcher(s):** Name: Ms KN SKOSANA  
E-mail address: 58321373@mylife.unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 067 1932 029

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof MP Modise  
E-mail address: modisp@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 012 429 6887

**Title of research:**

**An exploration of the important role of teachers in the development of the curriculum in Mpumalanga province of South Africa**

**Qualification:** MEd CURRICULUM STUDIES

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2023/11/08 to 2026/11/08.

*The medium risk application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/11/08 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



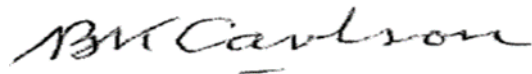
## ANNEXURE 2: PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING

8 Nahoon Valley Place  
Nahoon Valley  
East London  
5241  
1 November 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have proofread and edited the following thesis using the Windows 'Tracking' system to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student to action and produce a clean copy:

*The pivotal role of educators in shaping the curriculum: A case study of Mpumalanga Province, South Africa* by KATRINAH NOHLALI SKOSANA, a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS in Curriculum and Instructional Studies in the College of Education at the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA.



Brian Carlson (B.A., M.Ed.)

Professional Editor

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**Disclaimer:** Although I have made comments and suggested corrections, the responsibility for the quality of the final document lies with the **student** in the first instance and not with myself as the editor.

## **ANNEXURE 3: A SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

### **SECTION A: Demographics**

**Age:** 28

**Gender:** female

**Highest qualification:** Bachelor of education honours

**Position at school:** Post level 1

**Number of years of teaching experience:** 4

### **SECTION B: Teachers involvement in the curriculum development**

#### **1. What is your perception of involving teachers in the curriculum development?**

Teachers are the only tools that the department has in order to ensure that the curriculum is implemented successfully. Involving them in the curriculum development ensures quality teaching and learning since they are also familiar with the learning gaps and are more equipped with knowledge and skills for addressing them. Teacher's involvement in the curriculum development reinforces the quality of our education system and prepares teachers for their readiness and smooth transitions in implementing such development.

#### **2. Are the teachers and other stakeholders interested in the creation of curricula?**

Yes, teachers are lifelong learners, they continue to further their studies to keep abreast with the changes within the curriculum. The stakeholders (parents to be exact) are major part of the decision making especially with regards to the type of curriculum that should be introduced or maintained at school. The department has also offered bursaries for teachers to further their academic knowledge and also offer content-based workshops to ensure that teachers are aware of what needs to be done and how it should be done. There are also curriculum inspectors (CI) who also visit schools as per schedule to monitor curriculum implementation in schools.

### **3. What role does your school play in curriculum design/development?**

Each school has a curriculum policy and committees which are formed to ensure that the curriculum is continuously developed to meet the changing needs of learners and for it to be relevant. IQMS is also conducted annually to keep track of the needs that teachers may have and to identify areas in need for development. The school therefore has the duty to ensure that teachers have adequate resources to implement the curriculum.

### **4. Describe your engagement in the decision-making process to implement a new program at your school.**

I am a subject head for Mathematics and part of the ICT committee. I work closely with the Head of department to ensure that the curriculum is implemented and improved accordingly. During the pandemic we introduced electronic learning program for teachers and learners. This enforced learning Mathematics and other subjects through different technology platform.

### **5. How would you grade your level of understanding of CAPS? Motivate.**

Caps serves as a guide for teachers to channel learning and how learning should be structured accordingly. It consists of a set of reviewed subject-contents which are in line with the changing paradigms.

### **6. Do teachers have the same views of CAPS at your school as you do?**

Yes, everything revolves around Caps. All teachers use annual teaching plans and assessment programs that are align with the CAPS document as the umbrella of the whole curriculum

### **7. Have you been given training and knowledge prior to implementation of the new curriculum?**

I have undergone an induction program during the first year of employment. The Mpumalanga department of education also arranged 1+4 Mathematics interventions program which took place every Monday for a period of 2 years to equip teachers with knowledge and skills needed to teach the subject.

**8. Please tell the importance (significant roles) of teachers' involvement in curriculum**

They are the key implementers of the curriculum, and they understand it better as they are exposed to the working environment on a daily basis. They can easily address the challenges and have proven to successfully achieve the main objectives required.

**9. How should teachers be involved in curriculum development?**

They should be involved by furthering their education as lifelong learners and by participating in professional bodies of the school or those within the education system.

## **ANNEXURE 4: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Title: THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF EDUCATORS IN SHAPING THE CURRICULUM: A CASE STUDY OF MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

### **DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

My name is Katrinah Nohlali Skosana, and I am doing MED research in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Studies at the University of South Africa, under the supervision of Prof Mpho-Entle Modise. We invite you to participate in a study entitled **“The Pivotal Role of Educators in Shaping the Curriculum: A Case of Study Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The research project aims to explore the role of teachers in the curriculum development in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. This study is expected to collect important information that could help the Department of Education (DoE) in Nkangala District especially curriculum specialists by revealing challenges faced by teachers in relation to the curriculum, and the findings can also help the Department of Education to know what challenges are faced by teachers when it comes to the curriculum at the high school and provincial level.

### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

You are invited because we believe you can provide us with an informed view regarding the roles that teachers play in the curriculum development and the importance of their involvement. You are one of the participants who are participating in this study. Permission was sort through Unisa, your school and the Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education channels to conduct this research at your school. I am fully aware of The Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study involves semi-structured interview and studying of historical documents regarding curriculum development during the research study. The questions will ask you about your views on the role of teachers in the curriculum development and the importance of their involvement that will do to learner performance in the school. The expected duration of the interview will be for 30 minutes.

### **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

This study will ensure that teachers, students, and management understand why it is important for teachers to be involved in the curriculum development process at the provincial level and even district. This project will potentially build and advance knowledge and skills that will positively impact on teachers and learners and the

education system, in high school and primary school. The findings that will be acquired will help the teachers, learners and the Department of Education in Mpumalanga to sit down and revise their curriculum development planning by including teachers for better learner performance in the schools. The information obtained from this research will prompt the Department of Education in Nkangala District to train teachers on how to participate in the curriculum development and how they can get involved.

**ARE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There is no foreseeable negative consequence in participating in this research apart from your time spent responding to the questions; however, as indicated, you can withdraw anytime you feel uncomfortable.

**WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods, such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for ensuring that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and Research Ethics Review Committee members. Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. *A study report may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.*

**HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

The researcher will store hard copies of your answers for five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the researcher's office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

**WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not receive any incentives for participating in this study.

**HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education and the Research Permission Subcommittee (RPSC), Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

**HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**



If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, require any further information, or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact the researcher Ms KN Skosana on 0671932029 or email her on 58321373 @mylife.unisa.ac.za or the supervisor Professor MP Modise on 012 429 6887 or e-mail [modismp@unisa.ac.za](mailto:modismp@unisa.ac.za). Should you have concerns about how the research has been conducted, contact Professor Abraham Tlhalefang Motlhabane at 012 429 2840 or [motlhat@unisa.ac.za](mailto:motlhat@unisa.ac.za).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

KATRINAH NOHLALI SKOSANA

## **ANNEXURE 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES**

### **TEACHERS /HEAD OF DEPARTMENT/PRINCIPALS**

#### **SECTION A:**

##### **Biographical information:**

1. Please indicate your age
2. Please indicate your gender
3. What is your highest qualification?
4. What is your position at school?
5. What is the number of years you have been teaching?

#### **SECTION B:**

1. What is your perception of involving teachers in the curriculum development?
2. Are the teachers and other stakeholders interested in the creation of curricula?
3. What role does your school play in curriculum design/development?
4. Describe your engagement in the decision-making process to implement a new program at your school.
5. How would you grade your level of understanding of CAPS? Motivate.
6. Do teachers have the same views of CAPS at your school as you do?
7. Have you been given training and knowledge prior to implementation of the new curriculum?
8. Please describe the importance (significant roles) of teachers' involvement in curriculum.
9. How should teachers be involved in curriculum development?

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
REPRESENTATIVE/CIRCUIT REPRESENTATIVE**

**SECTION A:**

**Biographical information:**

6. Please indicate your age
7. Please indicate your gender
8. What is your highest qualification?
9. What is your position at school?
10. What is the number of years you have been teaching?

**SECTION B:**

- 1) In your view, whose duty is it to ensure that all stakeholders take part in the development of the curriculum?
- 2) What is your perception regarding teachers' involvement on curriculum development?
- 3) What role do you think teachers should play in the creation of the curriculum in South Africa?
- 4) In terms of their participation in curriculum development, how do teachers describe their responsibilities?
- 5) What might be the strength and weakness of the circuit office in the involvement of teachers in curriculum design?
- 6) Please tell the importance (significance roles) of teachers' involvement in curriculum development.
- 7) How should teachers be involved in curriculum development?

## ANNEXURE 6: TURNITIN REPORT

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