

Teachers' Implementation of the Prevocational Business Studies Curriculum in Eswatini Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

There is a relationship between the way a curriculum is implemented and meeting the curriculum's objectives, hence the study explored the implementation of prevocational Business Studies. This descriptive case study sought to investigate teachers' implementation of prevocational Business Studies in Eswatini Secondary schools. The main objectives of the study were to determine the teaching methods used, activities given and assessment method and tools used by prevocational Business Studies teachers when implementing the prevocational curriculum. The study also determined the challenges and possible solutions to the challenges faced by prevocational Business Studies teachers as they implement the curriculum. Three teachers from three different schools were selected to participate in this case study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, lesson observations and document analysis. Data were analyzed using content analysis and Rogers Diffusion of Innovation qualities. Findings of the study revealed that prevocational Business Studies teachers were mostly using teacher-centred methods. It also revealed that teachers were not giving learners the recommended activities and the assessment methods they administered were not enough as per the policy requirements. Prevocational Business Studies teachers were facing a number of challenges which needs the ministry and the curriculum developers to consider. The study concluded that teachers were not fully adhering to the policy of implementing the prevocational Business Studies as a competency based curriculum. Therefore, the recommendations were that the ministry should provide necessary resources and continuous in-service workshops for the teachers. Curriculum developers should consider the Diffusion of Innovation advantages in order to increase the adoption rate. Also, teacher training institutions should continue training teachers on competency based teaching.

KEY WORDS: Vocational education, prevocational education, prevocational Business Studies, Teaching Methods, Pedagogy.

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I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Meeting the educational needs of the citizens has been the priority of Eswatini government since independence in 1968, when policies were drafted to shape the educational system of the country. In Eswatini, the first educational policy was drafted by the Imbokodvo National Movement which stated that the educational system should serve the best interest of the nation from primary to tertiary level (Imbokodvo Manifesto, 1972). In 1984, the Swazi Government instituted a commission known as the National Education Review Commission (NERCOM) to review the educational system since there was a shortage of people with practical skills and so production in firms was inadequate. The NERCOM advocated for the introduction of practical subjects which included Business Studies, Agriculture, Home Economics and Technical studies (NERCOM, 1985). Later, in 1999, the National Development Strategy (NDS) indicated that the education system was not attractive and that it was producing graduates which were not demanded by industries. To curb this problem a competency based curriculum was proposed (Khumalo, 2010). This curriculum was supposed to provide entrepreneurial and technological skills especially in the practical subjects such agriculture and technical subjects (Ministry of Education, 1999). In 1999, the Prevocational curriculum was developed through an aid from African Development Bank (ADB) and was piloted in 16 schools of Eswatini in 2002 (African Development Fund report, 2003).

The main objectives for the Prevocational curriculum include: attracting more learners to do practical subjects; empowering the citizens with entrepreneurial and technological skills; and ensuring that learners have the basic skills to further their training (Business Studies Strand, 1999). These objectives were to meet the needs of Emaswati which was discovered by the NDS to be deficient in the curriculum.

Studies shows that teaching strategies does affect the acquiring of required skills like the entrepreneurial skill (Manawaroh, 2017; Vijayalakishm, 2019; Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall, 2009 and Nani, 2014). A report from World Bank showed that the Eswatini youth unemployment rate was increasing every year (World Bank, 2019). The report showed a high rate of 52.96 % in 2007 - five years from the implementation of the Prevocational curriculum which was designed and implemented to tackle unemployment. The youth unemployment rate was increasing each year. In 2008 it was 52.96%; 2009 it was 53.05%; 2010 it was 53.09%; 2011 it was 53.13%; 2012 it was 53.27%; 2013 it was 53.42%; 2014 it was 53.49%; 2015 it was 53.50%; 2016 it was 54.14%; and in 2017 the rate was 54.78%. Similarly, the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) (2019) and Khumalo (2010) studies showed that the graduates were not opening their own business rather they were being employed as labourers, with others restarting their Secondary level doing another curriculum. Likewise, according to Amdouni, Paredes, Kribs & Mabayi (2017), the way a teacher handles his/her class does affect the interest of learners in that particular subject. Moreover, in 2002 the number for learners doing prevocational education was 1053 both females and males (ADF 2003). In contrast to that, reports from Examination Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) showed that numbers of candidates doing prevocational curriculum had decreased drastically to 248 in 2018 (ECESWA, 2019). That showed a decline of about 76% from the numbers during implementation. All the above statistics showed that the objectives of Prevocational curriculum were not achieved; hence this study explored the teachers' implementation of Prevocational Business Studies curriculum in Eswatini senior secondary schools. The study answered the following research questions:

1. How do the methods teachers use in the teaching of prevocational Business Studies curriculum compare with the methods recommended in the curriculum?
2. Are the activities given to learners by Prevocational Business Studies teachers consistent with those suggested in the curriculum?
3. Are the assessment methods and tools used by Prevocational Business Studies teachers the same as those recommended in the curriculum?
4. What challenges do the Prevocational Business Studies teachers encounter in the implementation of the curriculum?
5. What are the Prevocational Business Studies teachers suggested solutions to the identified challenges?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework for this study was the Diffusion of Innovation Theory developed by Everett Rogers in 1962. Rodgers felt that when investigating the adoption of new technology or curriculum the Diffusion of Innovation theory is ideal to determine the reason for its full use or rejection. According to Rogers (2003), diffusion refers to a process whereby new ideas or technological measures considered relevant by Person A for improvement purposes in a situated context is introduced to Person B. Diffusion involves various inter-related activities such as decision making and systemic preparation before any new idea / technology is being adopted or rejected by individuals or social systems. This theory asserts that there are three broad phases in a diffusion process (Bentley, 2010; Berman & McLaughlin, 1976). These are: Initiation, Implementation, and Continuation. All the stages have different activities which are interactive. These activities include decision making choices, support, and putting into practice the required necessities for intending recipients of change. They do not occur sequentially in time and place (ibid).

Spreading of new innovation can be achieved through considering five qualities related to the innovation from the perspective of the innovators; based on Rogers, (2003), these five qualities are: Relative advantage, Compatibility, Simplicity, Trial-ability and Observable findings. The study used the Diffusion of Innovation theory as it focuses on the teacher as an adopter or implementer of a curriculum. That is why the theory was suitable for the study as it investigated teachers' implementation of a Prevocational Business Studies curriculum. Also, the theory was used in developing the research instruments and also analysing the collected data.

Prevocational Business Studies Curriculum

Prevocational Business Studies curriculum known as The Education Project 1 was developed in 1999 by the Ministry of Education special committee together with specialist from Canada (Classens, 2008). It was introduced in 2002 in sixteen pilot schools. The Prevocational curriculum is a competency based type of curriculum which allowed learners to work on their own and do more practical tasks. Similarly, it advocated for teaching methods that aid active learning rather than those that encourage passivity and rote memorization should be used by teachers to improve the learner outcomes (UNICEF, 2000).

Necessary resources were provided to ensure that the curriculum progresses well – this included business centre laboratories, computers, projector, printer, video and audio recorders and all prescribed and recommended text books (Khumalo, 2010). The curriculum uses a modular format with each module including recommended methods, activities and assessment tools to be used (Tourism Strand, 1999). This was designed to

help the teacher to be able to teach the curriculum as a competency based curriculum. The role of the teacher in Prevocational curriculum is being a facilitator which include being: a controller, an organiser, an assessor, a promoter, a participant, a tutor and an observer (Joseph & Godstime, 2016).

Mainly, teachers are expected to use learner centred methods which allow independent learning like projects, cooperative learning, debate, roleplaying, problem based learning, brainstorming, and group work (Joseph and Godstime, 2016; Bierne, Titkoj, Cerkovskise & Lasmane, 2017 and Pilz, Berger and Canning 2014). Also, learners play the central role in the classroom as they learn through a series of activities that are proposed by the teacher. Learners are responsible for their learning.

Assessing methods that are stated by the policy include tests, presentations, practical examination, research and assignments (Examination Council of Eswatini Prevocational Business Studies Syllabus, 2019). Teachers can use different instruments for grading learners' competencies and some of these tools are provided by the strand manuals and syllabus. These include marking guidelines for tests and examination, checklists, rubrics and rating scales (Maphalala 2015; Business Studies Strand 1999). They are required to be included in the teachers file for the duration of the two years.

Empirical Studies

A number of studies have been done to investigate the implementation of Prevocational curriculum and other curriculums in Eswatini and other countries. A study by Zhu, Ennis and Chen (2011) carried out in United States of America (USA) on the implementation of a constructive physical education curriculum. It was an ethnographic study where one teacher with his learners were participants. The study investigated challenges faced by teachers in implementing a Constructivist physical education curriculum that had fidelity implications, structured interview and lesson observation schedules were used to collect data. The findings of the study showed that school background and teachers' values and preference had an impact on how the teacher was implementing the curriculum. Thus such factors were considered to be part of the contributory factors in not achieving smooth implementation of the. It was recommended that curriculum implementation should be treated as a learning opportunity. Both my study and Zhu, Ennis and Chen (2011) were both qualitative but whilst my study was about prevocational curriculum, Zhu, Ennis and Chen's study was about physical education.

Joskin (2013) conducted a study in Papua New Guinea investigating how policy intentions of the Outcomes-Based English Education curriculum were received and practiced by teachers and to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation process. The study was a case study and used focus group discussions, structured interview, observation and document analysis methods were used to collect data. Findings of the study revealed that the curriculum change was a challenging policy and therefore recommendation was that there is a need for collaborative professional development if policy is to be aligned with practice. Joskin (2013)'s study and my study were both exploring how teachers were implementing a curriculum with respect to the policy. The difference was that my study was on the Prevocational Business Studies and Joskin was exploring the OBE English education curriculum...

Makunja (2016) investigated challenges facing teachers in implementing the competency based curriculum in secondary schools in Tanzania. The study involved 102 teachers randomly selected from 6 community secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, 6 heads of school and 6 academic masters/mistresses who were purposively selected by their virtue of their positions. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data. The findings established that teachers faced a variety of challenges which impeded the effective implementation of the competency based curriculum. These factors include: lack of training and enough resources. In the light of these findings it was recommended that teachers should be given opportunities for their participation in formulation and/or review of curriculum. Makunja's study and my study were both investigating challenges teachers were facing in implementing a competency based curriculum. The difference was that Makunja's study adopted a mixed method and my study adopted a qualitative method.

There are studies specific on the implementation of Prevocational curriculum. One of these studies was carried out by Pilz, Berger and Canning (2014) where they were doing a comparative project on prevocational education in secondary schools in seven European countries. They covered countries like Austria, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal and Scotland. They were looking at the extent at which prevocational curriculum education competencies are embedded in the official curriculum and also how the teachers were implementing the curriculum. 75 teachers were participants in the study. Content analysis of each country's curriculum and interviews were used to collect data. The study revealed that the prevocational curriculum is taught differently in each country and identified factors which include the availability of resources and further training of teachers as contributors to the differences. Recommendation was that there should be a link between the classroom skills and work required skills. Pilz, Berger and Canning's study and my study were both exploring prevocational curriculum. The difference was that Pilz, Berger and Canning's study was done in European countries whilst my study was done in Eswatini. But there are differences in instruments, design etc?

Another study on prevocational curriculum was done by Classens (2008) where he investigated the effects of Education 1 Project (Prevocational curriculum) on skills development and prospects of learners at a

secondary school in Swaziland. One school was used with four teachers participating. The study found that there were no official data available for tracking learners once they graduated, which made it difficult to determine if the education 1 Project was having the desired effects on learners. There were responses from teachers that suggested that they were aware of some learners' accomplishments which they gathered informally from family members. Also, the skills and prospects of learners in prevocational education were also affected by various external factors which included lack of financial support of the programme from government, the quality of teachers, and lack of collaboration between the education and business sectors. Conclusion was that the skills and prospects of students in prevocational education were also affected by various external factors which included financial support of the program by the government. Recommendation was that in order for student performance to improve, the government should take measures to increase its support of prevocational education. Classen's study and my study were both looking at Prevocational curriculum in Eswatini. The difference between the studies was that Classen's study was to investigate the effects of the prevocational education on skills development and prospects of learners whilst my study was exploring the implementation of prevocational Business Studies. Another study was by Khumalo (2010) in Swaziland. He investigated the impact of Prevocational Technical education in secondary schools in preparing school leavers for the world of work. Teachers, teaching methodology, equipment and their maintenance and management of the Prevocational education were interrogated. Four pre-vocational teachers, three pre-vocational pupils, three pre-vocational school principals, two pre-vocational alumni, two parents of pre-vocational pupils, one former pre-vocational project manager, one pre-vocational curriculum designer, two employers of pre-vocational pupils and one lecturer of Swaziland College of Technology were participants in the study. The total number of participants was 19. Literature review, observations and interviews were used to collect data. The findings of the study revealed that teachers are not competent to teach the programme, government support is lacking, materials for practical work is insufficient and teachers are complaining about the programme. The study also revealed that the alumni of the programme are unemployed. Conclusions was that the programme is good for developing countries like Swaziland and he also recommended that the MoET should provide workshops and resources for ease of implementation of the prevocational programme. Khumalo's study and my study were both qualitative. The difference was that my study was exploring the implementation of Prevocational Business Studies Curriculum yet Khumalo was investigating challenges and constraints of Prevocational Technical studies.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative in nature. It employed the interpretivist qualitative Paradigm, in which an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the teaching practices of three Business Studies Prevocational teachers was conducted. Killen (2012) and Yin (2014) stated that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context.

A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the three teachers from three prevocational schools from one region of Eswatini. The researcher acknowledges that no single method is self-sufficient or adequate in itself in collecting valid and reliable data (Creswell, 2011). Thus, in this study three methods were used as a means of offsetting the weaknesses or biases which can be found in one method. Therefore, this study employed semi-structured interview, classroom observation and document analysis.

The instruments were then validated by subjecting them to thorough scrutiny from experts in curriculum studies and specialists in vocational teaching. The constructive feedback and responses received from these experts were then used to improve on the content of the instruments before they were finally administered to participants. Semi-structured interviews were directly administered to Prevocational Business Studies teachers. An interview schedule was prepared and it contained two sections; Section A, background information and Section B the research questions. Also, teachers' classroom teaching was observed, three times per teacher. The observation guide had sections A and B. Section A comprised of demographic information of the teacher such as qualification and experience in teaching Prevocational Business Studies. Section B had five columns: one for performance to be observed and the other four showed the scaling of the performance from NOT DONE, POORLY DONE, DONE and WELL DONE. The criteria for scaling comprised of the following:

Not Done	Poorly Done	Done	Well done
Did not use any learner centred strategy and did not give any activity to learner. Did not use the strand manual.	Rarely using the recommended teaching strategies in at least one lesson and not giving learners tasks and does not use the strand manual.	The teacher employed the learner centred strategies in at least two lessons and sometimes gave activities to teachers and used the strand manual.	The teacher effectively employed the necessary strategies and gave the learners tasks to reveal understanding and followed the recommendations of

			the policy and or syllabus.
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Lastly, teachers' preparation books and teachers' files were analysed. The Document analysis protocol had two Columns. The first column included the indicators and the second column was the scales which were NOT SHOWN, POORLY SHOWN, SHOWN and WELL SHOWN. Criteria for scaling considered the following:

NOT SHOWN	POORLY SHOWN	SHOWN	WELL SHOWN
Lesson plan has no objectives written in competencies form and have tasks for learners. Teachers files does not contain assessment methods and assessment tools	Lesson plan has objectives not written in competency and no activities. Teachers' files contain only a methods and tools for assessment.	Lesson plan has objectives written in competency and few activities. Teachers files contain a number of methods and tools for assessment	Lesson plan has objectives in competency and activities Teachers' files contain a variety of methods and tools for assessment.

Maree (2013) stated that it is very important to consider integrity in every research study to ensure that the study is legitimate. The study adapted the standard research ethics as articulated in literature (ibid). This included getting research permit from the University of Eswatini, getting permission from the Director of education from Ministry of Education and Training and consent of the participants in the study. The study ensured that the confidentiality of data, anonymity, privacy and safety of participants was observed and maintained.

IV. FINDINGS

Teaching methods used by teachers.

Result from interview revealed that two of the teachers were not aware of the policy requirements and findings from classroom observations confirmed that teachers relied on teacher centred methods like lecture, demonstration and question and answer. Likewise, in the teachers' preparation book, they mostly used teaching strategies were the teacher centred ones. This indicated that they failed to understand the objectives of the curriculum. Madukwini (2016) explained that once teachers failed to comprehend the objectives of the curriculum, then it will be difficult for them to implement it correctly. Understating the objectives indicated teachers understanding of pedagogical knowhow (Faremi, 2014). Hand, Cavagnetto, Chen and Park (2016); Madukwini (2016); Faremi (2014), assert that a curriculum cannot be effectively implemented if teachers lack the pedagogy. Myhill et al. (2012), found that teachers who lacked the pedagogical skills of implementing a type of curriculum resort to bring practice which they are used to, which was also revealed from the findings of this study.

Activities given to learners

Findings from interviews, classroom observations and teachers' lesson plans revealed that learners were rarely given activities which reveal each learners competence in that topic. Teachers stated that they do not follow the strand manual in terms of the suggested activities since they require lot of time and financial resources. They indicated that they relied on text books which were not designed for a vocational curriculum. Also, observational evidence showed that teachers were not giving exercises that would determine the learners' competency as some were only giving notes in their lessons. The study showed similar findings to studies by Makunja (2016) and Payate (2009) who found that once teachers fail to understand the curriculum it becomes difficult to give the correct nature of activities to learners.

Assessment methods and assessment tools

Findings from the study revealed that teachers were aware of the assessment methods they are supposed to administer to learners as per the requirement of the syllabus. This include: tests, examinations, practical, assignments, presentations and learners portfolio. Evidence from teachers' files revealed that most teachers were only able to give tests and examinations. Also, revealed in the study was that teachers were having difficulty in using some of the assessment tools given in the policy since some were not familiar with them from their teacher training institutions. These findings of the study are in line with findings of Nkalane (2015) who discovered that some Business Studies Vocational college lecturers failed to adhere to the policy requirements in terms of assessment methods which were practical assignments, learners' portfolio as they complained about limited time and lack of knowhow.

Challenges in the implementation of Prevocational curriculum

Result of the study revealed that Prevocational Business Studies Teachers were facing a number of challenges as they implement the curriculum. Amongst them include; limited and out - dated teaching materials. The study revealed that the available materials were teachers' textbooks and they were supplied in 2001 when the Prevocational programme was introduced and no supply followed after that. The findings were consistent with findings from Mngometulu (2017) who found that there were insufficient books available for teaching siSwati language in Swaziland. Lack of training and workshop had resulted in teachers not being able to communicate and effectively implement the competency based curriculum as per the policy requirements. That is consistent with a study by Joskin (2013) who discovered that teachers were not following the policy as they were implementing the Competency based curriculum in Papua New Guinea due to lack of workshop. They complained about not having learners who are motivated especially in terms of starting their own businesses. Makunja (2016) also discovered that in Tanzania teachers were complaining of not having motivated learners doing the Competency Based curriculum because they lacked readiness to do things on their own as that is what they were oriented to since primary education.

Rogers (2003) Diffusion of Innovation Qualities

Regarding to the Diffusion of Innovation qualities, both teachers and learners have not realised the merit of the Prevocational Business Studies subject such that both (teachers and learners) did not have any passion in doing the subject. Teachers on the other hand fail to empower themselves like acquiring more skills to be in a position to teach the subject well. The candidates kept on not choosing the subject which meant that learners did not see any advantage of doing the Prevocational studies. Khumalo (2010) stated that due to the lack of proper career path for the programme alumni, numbers for learners doing prevocational subjects had decreased.

In terms of comparability, teachers did not see any difference in teaching the Prevocational curriculum which is competency based and teaching GCE which was objectives based. That is why teachers still employed the traditional methods of teaching like lecture method.

Concerning the Trial-ability of the Prevocational curriculum, it was still on trial since the 2002 in the sixteen schools. There have been changes in the curriculum. According to Pereira (2012) once teachers failed to notice the difference between the former and new curriculum, then it would be difficult to implement the new curriculum correctly.

Pertaining simplicity and ease of use, the study revealed that teachers were struggling to teach some of the content because they did not learn it in their training. Also, teachers have shown that they are unable to use the strand manuals to aid their teaching and they have difficulty using the assessment tools. Also the lack of providing the expected activities made the curriculum to be a difficult one.

Finally, regarding the observable findings, it is clear that the intended objectives of the curriculum are not met. This included the objective of having an attractive curriculum – the discrepancy is that the numbers of candidates that were doing prevocational Business Studies decreased and that some schools do not have any candidate. Also the objective of decreasing the level of youth unemployment proved to be futile as the National Curriculum tracer study (2019) proved that the prevocational graduates are not self-employed; some are restarting their education and doing other subjects and curriculum and some are working as shop assistants around the country.

Ways to Overcome challenges in implementing the curriculum.

Prevocational Business Studies teachers revealed that continuous training and workshop could be helpful in the implementation of the curriculum. This finding of the study is consistent with findings from studies by Mngometulu (2017), Sabola (2017) and Ndwandwe (2013). Mngometulu found that it was necessary for siSwati teachers to be trained to improve their teaching. Ndwandwe (2013) observed that agriculture teachers needed in-service training in competency based instruction.

Furthermore, findings of the study revealed that there was a need to make the programme attractive by making sure that the graduates are able to continue with their career path. This means that the graduates should be able to be admitted in higher institutions. This will attract even those learners who are more ambitious and capable. The Prevocational alumni should receive support from government and organisations to further their skills, to make it more attractive (Khumalo, 2010).

Moreover, the study showed that time was limited for teachers to be able to administer the required assessment tasks especially the practical exercise. Teachers have suggested that more time be allowed on the teaching timetable to allow them to give the necessary assessment tasks. This finding is consistent with Mngometulu (2017) who found that it was necessary for siSwati teachers to be given sufficient teaching time to allow them to use the different materials and activities.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded the following:

1. The implementation of Prevocational Business Studies was not as per the policy.
2. Teachers were not using the recommended teaching methods and also the activities that they gave to learners did not show any competency.
3. Teachers did not administer the variety of assessment and also were having difficulty in understanding the scaling criteria used in the prevocational assessment tools.
4. Moreover, teachers face a variety of challenges which impede on the successful implementation of Prevocational Business Studies during the teaching and learning process.
5. With these challenges, it is likely that the implementation of the Prevocational curriculum was bound to fail to achieve the desired objectives.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings obtained from the study and the literature review it is recommended that:

- In-service workshops should be conducted by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to train serving teachers on Competency based curriculum.
- Schools should provide adequate technological equipment such as computers and access to the internet, projectors, television sets, and audio cassettes which are devices that aid in teaching and assessing the Prevocational Business Studies curriculum.
- The teacher training institutions should train pre-service teachers on competency based teaching and learning methods since the curriculum is still provided in Eswatini school system and the Ministry of Education and Training is in a process of changing the whole education system to be Competency based.
- The National Curriculum Centre should provide materials that teachers can use like a manual so that they can be user friendly and easy to understand by the teachers.
- Curriculum designers should include teachers when developing the curriculum as that makes the curriculum easily adopted and consider the needs of the learners also.

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