



Exploring High School Economics Teachers' Curriculum Implementation Practices: A Case of The Northern Cape Province of South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This empirical study explored high school Economics teachers' curriculum implementation practices in South Africa. The research focused on a sample of three Economics teachers purposefully selected from three schools in the Northern Cape province. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) and adopting a qualitative approach, the study employed a case study design. To get insight on the Economics teachers' curriculum practices, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis were used to generate data from the selected high school Economics teachers. Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic analysis were followed in analysing the triangulated data. The study findings indicate that some Economics teachers' practices on instructional planning, selection of resources, feedback, and reflective practices promoted meaningful learning. The study concludes that although there are pockets of effective curriculum implementation practices by Economics teachers, there is a need to continue with in-service teacher training to enhance the teachers' curriculum implementation practices. The study recommends that Economics teachers should form Professional Learning Communities where they learn and share good practices to provide teachers with continuous in-service training on how to plan lessons that cater for diverse learners' needs. This study contributes to the scholarship by providing insights into how teachers' curriculum practices can be enhanced both at pre-service and in-service levels to improve teacher effectiveness and efficiency. Furthermore, the study forms the basis on which further research on Economics teachers' curriculum implementation practices on a more representative scale can be conducted.

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INTRODUCTION

Research on teachers' practices has been central to educational research since it has enlightened understanding of how teachers' actions and decisions influence learners' learning.¹ Decades of

¹ Yan Zhu and Gabriele Kaiser, "Impacts of Classroom Teaching Practices on Students' Mathematics Learning Interest, Mathematics Self-Efficacy and Mathematics Test Achievements: A Secondary Analysis of Shanghai Data from the International Video Study Global Teaching InSights," *ZDM – Mathematics Education* 54, no. 3 (2022): 581–93, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11858-022-01343-9>.

research have continuously shown that the quality of instruction a learner receives significantly impacts their learning more than any other factor.² There is a consensus that teachers' practices in the classroom directly impact the extent to which learners acquire the requisite knowledge, skills and values in any subject.³ The success of any curriculum implementation depends on the most critical factor: the teacher.⁴ It is undoubtedly true that teachers hold the key to the successful implementation of any curriculum.⁵

In Economics, effective teachers' practices are essential as the subject is critical to a country's political, economic, and social development.⁶ Exposing learners to Economics concepts offers many opportunities to develop mathematical, graphing, critical thinking, analytical, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.⁷ These high skills empower learners to efficiently use resources and interpret production, consumption, and exchange data.⁸ Moreover, the subject enables learners to understand human rights issues and engage in poverty alleviation. The knowledge and skills alluded to above demand exceptional teachers' practices if learners are to benefit from the teaching and learning process.⁹ Consequently, Economics teachers are in a prime position for enhanced acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and values embedded in the subject.

Notwithstanding the preceding, the Economics curriculum poses severe challenges to learners due to ineffective curriculum implementation practices by teachers.¹⁰ Researchers such as Ancho and Serbo, Asarta et al., and Ismael et al. point out that teachers still heavily rely on teacher-centred practices.¹¹ Asarta et al. mention about 76%-80% of Economics teachers still rely on the traditional chalk-and-talk approach, which relegates learners to passive recipients of knowledge.¹² For this reason, class meetings are often associated with boredom and routine.¹³ Given that Economics is a subject that demands analytical, technical, critical, and problem-solving skills, it is understandable why the subject is posing challenges to learners because teachers' practices are not creating opportunities for meaningful learning to take place so that learners can develop these high-demanding skills.¹⁴

Economics teachers' practices have been investigated internationally in countries such as Finland, Malaysia, and Nigeria. For instance, in Malaysia, Aprianti and Sahid conducted a study to identify the relationship between teachers' competencies and the effect of teachers' competencies on Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) learning.¹⁵ The study findings statistically proved that the

² J. Hattie, "250+ Influences on Student Achievement," *Visible Learning*. Available Online at: https://Visible-Learning.Org/Wp-Content/Uploads/2018/03/250-Influences-Final-Effect-Size-List-2017_VLPLUS.Pdf, 2017.

³ Elizabeth Anthony, "(Blended) Learning: How Traditional Best Teaching Practices Impact Blended Elementary Classrooms.," *Journal of Online Learning Research* 5, no. 1 (2019): 25–48; Simon Finkelstein, Umesh Sharma, and Brett Furlonger, "The Inclusive Practices of Classroom Teachers: A Scoping Review and Thematic Analysis," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 25, no. 6 (May 12, 2021): 735–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1572232>.

⁴ K. Ramsarghey, "What Educator Capabilities Are Necessary for Reflective Learning in Accounting Students?," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 34, no. 2 (May 2020), <https://doi.org/10.20853/34-2-3336>.

⁵ Handoko Handoko and Rabbi Antardidha, "The Use of Instructional Media in Improving Student's Skill in Essay Writing Through Blended Learning Platform," *Jurnal Arbitrer* 6, no. 1 (2019): 53–58.

⁶ Akin-Ibidiran T Yemi, Ogunode N. Jacob, and Ibidiran J. Akinbusoye, "Administration Of Economics Programme In Nigerian Secondary Schools: Problems And Solution," *European Journal of Humanities and Educational Advancements* 2, no. 6 (2021): 77–82.

⁷ Olusola Samuel Ojo and Babatunde Adeyemi, "Application of Nonlinear Autoregressive Neural Network to Estimation of Global Solar Radiation over Nigeria," *Journal of Advances in Science and Engineering* 3, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.37121/jase.v3i2.98>.

⁸ Yemi, Jacob, and Akinbusoye, "Administration Of Economics Programme In Nigerian Secondary Schools..."

⁹ Gailele L. Sekwena, "Active Learning Pedagogy for Enriching Economics Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 22, no. 3 (March 30, 2023): 241–55, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.3.15>.

¹⁰ Ojo and Adeyemi, "Application of Nonlinear Autoregressive Neural Network to Estimation of Global Solar Radiation..."

¹¹ Inero Ancho and Rochelle S Serbo, "Authentic Learning in Teaching Economics," *Journal of Research, Policy & Practice of Teachers and Teacher Education* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1–11; Carlos Asarta, Rebecca Chambers, and Cynthia Harter, "Teaching Methods in Undergraduate Introductory Economics Courses: Results From a Sixth National Quinquennial Survey," *The American Economist* 66, no. 1 (2021): 18–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0569434520974658>; Ramee Ismail et al., "Active Learning in Economic Subject: A Case Study at Secondary School," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 19, no. 10 (2020): 19–31.

¹² Asarta, Chambers, and Harter, "Teaching Methods in Undergraduate Introductory Economics Courses..."

¹³ Céline Buchs et al., "Challenges for Cooperative Learning Implementation: Reports from Elementary School Teachers," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 43, no. 3 (May 27, 2017): 296–306, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2017.1321673>.

¹⁴ Rabindra Nepal and Ann Rogerson, "From Theory to Practice of Promoting Student Engagement in Business and Law-Related Disciplines: The Case of Undergraduate Economics Education," *Education Sciences* 10, no. 8 (2020): 205.

¹⁵ Vera Aprianti and Sheerad Sahid, "The Relationship between Teachers' Competency and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Learning among Economics Teachers," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 8, no. 11A (October 2020): 63–70.

competencies of Economics teachers have a huge positive impact on 4IR learning. In a related qualitative study in Finland, Platz investigated Game-Based Learning (GBL) as a teaching strategy.¹⁶ The study findings revealed that this strategy was a more effective learner-centred Economics teaching strategy and sighted several advantages of using GBL over other strategies. In support of the effect of teaching strategies on Economics teaching and learning, a Nigerian study conducted by Idika revealed that the teaching methods and strategies teachers choose play a significant role in the effective implementation of the Economics curriculum.¹⁷ In the South African context, previous studies have shown that integration of ICT enriches and enhances Economics curriculum implementation.¹⁸ In fact, Sekwena brings a more comprehensive approach to teachers' practices as his study elaborates on how active learning pedagogy enables learners to acquire high-order thinking skills.¹⁹

Although some studies on Economics curriculum implementation have been conducted in South Africa, most have been conducted in other countries.²⁰ Those that have been conducted in South Africa were primarily focused on ICT integration. Examples include Kimanzi and Sekwena's studies which focused on how active learning pedagogy enriches high-order thinking skills in Economics learners.²¹ No study has been conducted in the Northern Cape province regarding how Economics teachers implement the Economics curriculum. This study, therefore, seeks to explore Northern Cape Economics teachers' practices in the implementation of the Economics curriculum in an attempt to contribute to the body of knowledge on how Economics teachers' practices can be improved to enhance Economics curriculum implementation. The study seeks to answer the following primary question: What are the Economics teachers' current curriculum implementation practices?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' Practices

Teachers' practices are conceptualised as all educational activities that involve learning, teaching and assessment that a teacher undertakes to achieve educational outcomes.²² This study views teachers' practices as the activities and actions teachers embark on to achieve specific goals. Worth mentioning is that teachers' practices include teacher-centeredness, learner-centeredness, selection of resources reflective, assessment and feedback, and instructional practices, amongst others.²³ Teachers' practices should create conducive learning environments where learners are motivated to acquire knowledge individually and collaboratively as group members.²⁴ The teachers' practices should help learners develop an engaged relationship with the content.²⁵ Available literature documents that teachers' practices are influenced by factors such as teachers' qualifications and experience, technological competence, availability of instructional resources, and teachers' beliefs, amongst other factors.²⁶

¹⁶ Liane Platz, "Learning with Serious Games in Economics Education a Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of Game-Based Learning in Upper Secondary and Higher Education," *International Journal of Educational Research* 115 (2022): 102031.

¹⁷ Ezinne Orié Idika, "Students' and Teachers' Factors Hindering Effective Teaching and Learning of Economics in Secondary Schools in the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State," *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, July 1, 2020.

¹⁸ M K Kimanzi, "Integration of ICT in Teaching and Learning of Economics and Management Sciences: Student Teachers' perspectives in South Africa," in *Social Sciences International Research Conference*, ed. H. Van der Merwe, J. Surujlal, and L. Van den Berg (North West University Potchefstroom, South Africa, 2021), 592–604.

¹⁹ Sekwena, "Active Learning Pedagogy for Enriching Economics Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills."

²⁰ Aprianti and Sahid, "The Relationship between Teachers' Competency and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Learning among Economics Teachers"; Idika, "Students' and Teachers' Factors Hindering Effective Teaching and Learning of Economics in Secondary Schools in the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State."

²¹ Kimanzi, "Integration of ICT in Teaching and Learning of Economics and Management Sciences: Student Teachers' perspectives in South Africa"; Sekwena, "Active Learning Pedagogy for Enriching Economics Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills."

²² Centre for Teaching Innovation, "Inclusive Teaching Strategies," 2020, <https://teaching.cornell.edu/>; Molaodi Tshelane, "Sustainable Professional Curriculum Practice for School Leadership Capacity Building," in *Curriculum Theory, Curriculum Theorising, and the Theoriser* (BRILL, 2020), 271–91, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004447943_015.

²³ Chrysi Rapanta et al., "Balancing Technology, Pedagogy and the New Normal: Post-Pandemic Challenges for Higher Education," *Postdigital Science and Education* 3, no. 3 (October 9, 2021): 715–42, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00249-1>.

²⁴ Larysa V. Kozibroda et al., "Practice and Innovations of Inclusive Education at School," *International Journal of Higher Education* 9, no. 7 (August 7, 2020): 176, <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n7p176>.

²⁵ Tshelane, "Sustainable Professional Curriculum Practice for School Leadership Capacity Building."

²⁶ Ojo and Adeyemi, "Application of Nonlinear Autoregressive Neural Network to Estimation of Global Solar Radiation...."

Economics Curriculum Implementation

The abstract knowledge and skills embedded in the Economics curriculum demand teachers' practices to create opportunities for learners to acquire these knowledge and skills. Teachers should possess exceptional knowledge and skills to be able to choose appropriate instructional approaches and strategies, exhibit a deeper understanding of learning materials, and design and administer meaningful assessments.²⁷ Given that the Economics curriculum is embedded with complex skills such as graphing, mathematical, critical thinking, analysis, and decision-making, teachers should be alert to how their practices might enhance or deter meaningful learning.²⁸ Aprianti and Sahid, and Sasson et al. jointly agree that successful and effective curriculum implementation heavily relies on the effectiveness of teachers.²⁹ These scholars posit that the degree to which Economics teachers conform to the precepts, the integrity of Economics curriculum principles, and how meaningful opportunities are provided guarantee the correspondence between Economics curriculum and implementation.

The following section will focus on the teaching practices explored in the literature on implementing the Economics curriculum. The following sub-headings were identified from literature based on the nature of the subject and the skills and values which learners are expected to acquire.

Instructional Planning Practices

Instructional planning is the first stage of curriculum implementation, where the teacher identifies specific outcomes for each lesson.³⁰ The teacher also decides on the teaching approach and strategies, resources, and assessment forms to be used.³¹ The teacher visualises the lesson in motion and prepares for anticipated challenges and how they will be overcome.³² This phase is crucial as it determines whether a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning is set. The teacher captures what, how, and when learners will learn and the methods and materials they will learn from.³³ For teachers to plan effectively, they should know how to formulate objectives and understand the cognitive abilities of their learners and contextual factors.³⁴ Using a universal lesson plan does not result in effective Economics curriculum implementation, as learner abilities and contextual factors differ from place to place and class to class.³⁵

Selection of Curriculum Resources

Teachers should develop learning material using attractive and pleasant resources to effectively and efficiently achieve the set goals in the Economics curriculum.³⁶ According to Pepin and Gueudet, curriculum resources are all materials developed and used by teachers in teaching and learning.³⁷ Pepin and Gueudet go further to mention that resources could be "text (textbooks, policy guidelines, worksheets, etc.), other material (calculators and manipulatives) and digital ICT resources (interactive

²⁷ Ojo and Adeyemi, "Application of Nonlinear Autoregressive Neural Network to Estimation of Global Solar Radiation...."

²⁸ Ojo and Adeyemi, "Application of Nonlinear Autoregressive Neural Network to Estimation of Global Solar Radiation...."

²⁹ Aprianti and Sahid, "The Relationship between Teachers' Competency and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Learning among Economics Teachers."

³⁰ LEAP Innovations, "LEAP Learning Framework for Personalized Learning," 2017, <http://leaplearningframework.org/>.

³¹ Dil Angaiz, Zahra Jabeen, and Nazia Karim, "Perceptions Of Experienced And Novice Teachers About The Importance Of Lesson Planning For Effective Learning In Private Elementary Schools Of Gilgit City," *Pakistan Journal Of Social Research* 03, No. 03 (September 30, 2021): 446–57, <https://doi.org/10.52567/Pjsr.V3i3.268>.

³² Weiyang Li and Weicheng Zou, "A Study of EFL Teacher Expertise in Lesson Planning," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 66 (2017): 231–41.

³³ Angaiz, Jabeen, and Karim, "Perceptions Of Experienced And Novice Teachers About The Importance Of Lesson Planning For Effective Learning In Private Elementary Schools Of Gilgit City."

³⁴ Nigina Ganiyevna Xaydarova, "Importance Of Lesson Plans In Teaching Process.," *Педагогика и Психология в Современном Мире: Теоретические и Практические Исследования* 1, no. 10 (2022): 68–70.

³⁵ Xaydarova, "Importance Of Lesson Plans In Teaching Process."

³⁶ Thamrin Thamrin et al., "The Effectiveness of the Hybrid Learning Materials with the Application of Problem Based Learning Model (Hybrid-PBL) to Improve Learning Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *IJORER : International Journal of Recent Educational Research* 3, no. 1 (January 30, 2022): 124–34, <https://doi.org/10.46245/ijorer.v3i1.178>.

³⁷ Birgit Pepin and Ghislaine Gueudet, "Curriculum Resources and Textbooks in Mathematics Education," in *Encyclopedia of Mathematics Education*, ed. S. Lerman (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 172–76, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15789-0_40.

e-textbooks).”³⁸ Teachers must deliberate on the choice and use of resources if meaningful learning is to take place.³⁹ The teacher should be able to adapt and redesign the materials available to suit the intended goals and learner abilities and interests. However, it is documented in the available literature that Economics teachers do not use activities catering to inclusion, diversity, and gender issues.⁴⁰ The interactive nature of digital resources is more useful in formative assessment practices as they help to drive the next instructional steps. The resources Economics teachers use must encourage learner participation.⁴¹

Learner-centred Practices

Teachers have the choice to choose between teacher-centred practices and learner-centred practices. Teacher-centred practices involve all learning activities revolving around the teacher.⁴² There is no room for innovation, creativity, or critical thinking as the teacher dominates class proceedings.⁴³ On the contrary, learner-centred practices put the learner at the centre of learning; the learner actively participates in the learning process. Collaboration is encouraged; the classroom is motivated by open logical participation and critical thinking is promoted.

Available literature associates learner-centred teaching practices with effective curriculum implementation.⁴⁴ Effective and competent Economics teachers use active learning strategies to promote more profound and meaningful learning.⁴⁵ The teacher should intentionally create an environment and opportunities for learners to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills as envisaged in the curriculum. The key to learner-centred teaching strategies is that learners can decide on the material and how they want to learn.⁴⁶ Teaching strategies such as simulations, games, class discussions, questioning, jigsaws, field trips, cooperative learning resource persons, and digital-based learning enhance Economics learners’ understanding and academic achievement.⁴⁷ The higher-order thinking skills embedded in the Economics curriculum can only be achieved if learning is interactive.⁴⁸ This calls for the teacher to intentionally plan and deliver lessons in a manner that will solicit reciprocity from the learners. Using the active learning pedagogic approach can transform the learning of Economics from passive to participative learning, promoting deeper learning.⁴⁹ These ideas are also shared by Ancho and Serbo, who posit that teaching Economics should not be reduced to a mere transmission of Economics knowledge and facts but rather as a process of inferring from the concepts, connecting them to other concepts, and utilising them to find solutions.⁵⁰

³⁸ Pepin and Guedet, “Curriculum Resources and Textbooks in Mathematics Education,” 2.

³⁹ Retno Wulandari, Sri Utaminingsih, and Mohammad Kanzunudin, “Development of Class VI Elementary School Thematic Teaching Materials Based Local Wisdom,” *Journal of Education Technology* 4, no. 3 (2020): 296–301.

⁴⁰ Asarta, Chambers, and Harter, “Teaching Methods in Undergraduate Introductory Economics Courses: Results From a Sixth National Quinquennial Survey.”

⁴¹ Resilient Educator, “What Is Rote Learning-and Is It Effective? A Battle Between Memory Intelligence,” 2022, <https://resilienteducator.com/>.

⁴² Elisabeth Fischer and Martin Hänze, “How Do University Teachers’ Values and Beliefs Affect Their Teaching?,” *Educational Psychology* 40, no. 3 (March 15, 2020): 296–317, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2019.1675867>.

⁴³ Resilient Educator, “What Is Rote Learning-and Is It Effective? A Battle Between Memory Intelligence.”

⁴⁴ M. Arinal Rahman et al., “Challenges in Online Learning Assessment during the Covid-19 Pandemic,” *Kolokium Jurnal Pendidikan Luar Sekolah* 10, no. 1 (2022): 15–25.

⁴⁵ Ancho and Serbo, “Authentic Learning in Teaching Economics.”

⁴⁶ A. Sudderth, “What Is Student Centred Learning and Why Is It Important?,” 2022, <https://xqsuperschool.org/rethinktogether/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/11/brad-neathery-XrSzacdYbtQ-unsplash-scaled-1-1440x1080.jpg>.

⁴⁷ Ismail et al., “Active Learning in Economic Subject: A Case Study at Secondary School.”

⁴⁸ Mykhailo Chumak et al., “Applying Case Method in the Training of Future Specialists,” *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching* 11, no. 1 (January 17, 2022): 235, <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v11n1p235>.

⁴⁹ Sekwena, “Active Learning Pedagogy for Enriching Economics Students’ Higher Order Thinking Skills.”

⁵⁰ Ancho and Serbo, “Authentic Learning in Teaching Economics”; Shiella D. Malanog and John C. Vincent Aliasas, “Active Learning Strategies and Higher-Order Thinking Skills of Grade 10 Students,” *International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 3, no. 3 (September 14, 2021): 241–49, <https://doi.org/10.54476/iimrj255>.

Assessment and Feedback Practices

Available literature provides overwhelming evidence of the educational value of formative assessment and feedback in teaching-learning.⁵¹ Teachers heavily rely on the information they obtain from classroom assessments to improve their instructional methods.⁵² As such, it becomes prudent that teachers are deliberate and competent in collecting, analysing, and using assessment information.⁵³ Formative assessments inform teaching, improve learning, and assist students in achieving the highest possible standards.⁵⁴ This form of assessment is preoccupied with improving the learners' understanding by providing feedback to both the teacher and the learners on where the learners are experiencing difficulties.⁵⁵ Formative assessment arms teachers with information which they can use to modify or enhance their teaching strategies.

Reflective Teaching Practices

Reflective practice is a process where teachers interrogate the classroom events and experiences before, during, and after their occurrence to evaluate and make informed judgements critically.⁵⁶ Teachers have to reflect on the implications of their practices to enhance teaching and learning of the Economics curriculum.⁵⁷ They have to interrogate their choice of instructional approaches, resources, and assessment practices. Teachers should be lifelong learners who seek to improve their professional practice and identity.⁵⁸ Economics teachers should reflect on various factors in lesson plans.⁵⁹ They should be able to anticipate possible challenges before the lesson and find possible solutions.⁶⁰ Reflection should continue during the lesson when the lesson is ongoing. Teachers should be able to modify their teaching strategies, resources, and assessment forms as they conduct their lessons if and when needed.⁶¹ Teachers always ask themselves questions like "What went wrong?" and "How can I improve?" after completing the instruction. All these forms of reflection aim to enhance the teachers' practices so that their instruction is effective and results in meaningful learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is couched in Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) theory. The theory's origins can be traced back to Reuven Feuerstein's work which began in the late 1940s and later developed into a theory in the period 1950-1963. MLE has its roots in social constructivism theory which is Piaget's brainchild. Tzuriel views MLE interactions as "interactional processes in which parents or substitute adults interpose themselves between a set of stimuli and the human organism to modify the stimuli for

⁵¹ Zi Yan and David Boud, "Conceptualising Assessment-as-Learning," in *Assessment as Learning*, ed. Z. Yan and D. Boud (London: Routledge, 2021), 11–24, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003052081-2>.

⁵² Daniel Asamoah, Masitah Shahrill, and Siti Norhedayah Abdul Latif, "A Review of Formative Assessment Techniques in Higher Education During COVID-19," *The Qualitative Report*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5145>.

⁵³ Gavin T. L. Brown, "Is Assessment for Learning Really Assessment?," *Frontiers in Education* 4 (June 28, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00064>.

⁵⁴ Asamoah, Shahrill, and Abdul Latif, "A Review of Formative Assessment Techniques in Higher Education During COVID-19"; V S S Durga, "Formative and Summative Assessment for Learning: A Review," 2020.

⁵⁵ Yan and Boud, "Conceptualising Assessment-as-Learning."

⁵⁶ Andrzej Cirocki and Handoyo Puji Widodo, "Reflective Practice in English Language Teaching in Indonesia: Shared Practices from Two Teacher Educators," *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research* 7, no. 3 (2019): 15–35.

⁵⁷ Sekwena, "Active Learning Pedagogy for Enriching Economics Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills."

⁵⁸ Balqis Albreiki, Tetiana Habuza, and Nazar Zaki, "Framework for Automatically Suggesting Remedial Actions to Help Students at Risk Based on Explainable ML and Rule-Based Models," *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 19, no. 1 (September 19, 2022): 49, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00354-6>; H. P. Widodo and S. Ferdiansyah, "Engaging Student Teachers in Video-Mediated Self-Reflection in Teaching Practical.," in *Routledge International Handbook of Schools and Schooling in Asia*, ed. K. J. Kennedy and J. Lee (London: Routledge, 2018), 922–34.

⁵⁹ Manzi Wellington and Moreeng Boitumelo, "Challenges Facing Implementation of Economics Curriculum: The Experiences of Francis Baard District Teachers," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 11, no. 1 (January 2023): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2023.110101>.

⁶⁰ Dana Di Pardo Léon-Henri, "Valorizing Cultural and Linguistic Capital through Assessment Practices in Tertiary Transnational Contexts," in *Transnational English Language Assessment Practices in the Age of Metrics*, ed. O. Z. Barnawi, M. S., Silharbi, and A. A. Alzahrani (Taylor and Francis, 2022), 25–40.

⁶¹ Léon-Henri, "Valorizing Cultural and Linguistic Capital through Assessment Practices in Tertiary Transnational Contexts."

the developing child.”⁶² Feuerstein and Feuerstein postulate that MLE theory has 12 parameters, but the first four (intentionality, reciprocity, mediation for meaning, and transcendence) are deemed critical for mediated learning to occur.⁶³ This theory advocates that the mediator should deliberately create opportunities for learners to learn by designing activities and using resources and teaching strategies which allow learners to make meaning of their learning. The mediator’s role is that of a facilitator of learning and not a transmitter of knowledge.⁶⁴

MLE is relevant to this study as the interactions between the learner and teacher should be intentional. The teacher should be deliberate in choosing teaching strategies, curriculum resources, and assessments. Their choices should result in learners reciprocating to the stimuli (Economics Curriculum). Tzuriel argues that there is a need for openness and trust between the teacher (mediator) and the learner (reciprocity).⁶⁵ Once this rapport has been established, it may catalyse learners to acquire the planned or intended knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as learners can freely engage with the teacher and the Economics curriculum. Using appropriate strategies, resources, and assessments, the teacher becomes a facilitator of learning whose duty is to adjust the difficulty of (mediation of meaning) activities and concepts to match learners’ needs and interests.⁶⁶ Once learners understand Economics concepts, they can transfer what they learn in different situations (transcendence).

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research methods employed to carry out this study. These are discussed under research paradigm, approach, design, participant selection techniques, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

Research Paradigm

This study is lensed through the interpretivism paradigm to understand how Economics teachers implement the curriculum.⁶⁷ This type of qualitative research paradigm believes that there are multiple realities.

Research Approach

Pratt, Sonenshein, and Feldman state that qualitative research is often used to explore and understand people’s beliefs, experiences, attitudes, or behaviours.⁶⁸ The current study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate how teachers implemented the Economics curriculum. Teachers had to narrate their lived experiences as they were the implementers of the Economics curriculum.⁶⁹

Research Design

This study adopted a case study as the research design since it is appropriate for exceptional phenomenon cases. It is relevant for this study as it enables us to deal with how teachers of identified schools were implementing the Economics curriculum. Several studies have found case studies to effectively gather in-depth, detailed data vital for understanding complex issues.⁷⁰ More so, as

⁶² David Tzuriel, “Dynamic Assessment of Learning Potential,” in *Self-Directed Learning Oriented Assessments in the Asia-Pacific* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2012), 235–55, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4507-0_13.

⁶³ Reuven Feuerstein, Pnina S Klein, and Abraham J Tannenbaum, *Mediated Learning Experience (MLE): Theoretical, Psychosocial and Learning Implications* (Freund Publishing House Ltd., 1991).

⁶⁴ D. Tzuriel and A. Shamir, “The Effects of Mediation in Computer Assisted Dynamic Assessment,” *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* 18, no. 1 (March 28, 2002): 21–32, <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.0266-4909.2001.00204.x>.

⁶⁵ Tzuriel, “Dynamic Assessment of Learning Potential.”

⁶⁶ Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum, *Mediated Learning Experience (MLE): Theoretical, Psychosocial and Learning Implications*.

⁶⁷ Charles Kivunja and Ahmed Bawa Kuyini, “Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts,” *International Journal of Higher Education* 6, no. 5 (2017): 26–41.

⁶⁸ Michael G Pratt, Scott Sonenshein, and Martha S Feldman, “Moving beyond Templates: A Bricolage Approach to Conducting Trustworthy Qualitative Research,” *Organizational Research Methods* 25, no. 2 (2022): 211–38.

⁶⁹ A Van den Berg and M Struwig, “Guidelines for Researchers Using an Adapted Consensual Qualitative Research Approach in Management Research,” *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods* 15, no. 2 (2017): pp109-119.

⁷⁰ Stephen Gentles et al., “Sampling in Qualitative Research: Insights from an Overview of the Methods Literature,” *The Qualitative Report*, November 7, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2373>.

Harrison et al. suggest, case studies allow for the construction of a rich, contextualised understanding of the phenomenon being studied.⁷¹ This study will understand how the Economics teachers in the selected schools implement the Economics curriculum.

Research Participant and Selection Techniques

All teachers from the district formed the population of this study. However, three teachers were purposefully selected as research participants. Purposeful sampling is an intentional selection of participants as a result of the qualities they possess.⁷² The participants sampled were deemed to have rich thick information about the phenomenon under study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through semi-structured pre-classroom observations and post-observation interviews. A total of six 50-minute lessons (two lessons per teacher) were audio recorded. Post-observation interviews were conducted during intervals. This study adopted a thematic analysis to interpret and make meaning from the data generated. The thematic analysis focuses on identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns in qualitative data collection.⁷³

Ethical Consideration

The researchers obtained permission to conduct this study from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State (UFS-HSD2021/1088/21). After that, permission was also sought and granted by the Northern Cape Department of Education to conduct this study. The study participants were informed about the study and had to decide whether to participate or opt-out.⁷⁴ After this, consent was obtained from the participants, and the interview sessions were recorded and transcribed. Anonymity was ensured through pseudonyms and letters A, B, and C were used for the participants' data extracts.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researchers attempted to read the teachers' practices regarding Economics curriculum implementation through data gathered from interviews and observations using the lens of MLE theory. The study sought to answer the question: What are the Economics teachers' current curriculum implementation practices? The researchers relied on related literature on effective teacher curriculum implementation practices and MLE theory parameters to make sense of the data generated and to clarify the results. The following themes emerged: instructional planning practices, selection of curriculum resources, learner-centred practices, feedback practices, and reflective practices.

Instructional Planning Practices

Planning helps teachers identify the lesson objectives.⁷⁵ Lesson objectives are critical if effective instruction is to be realised. The chosen objectives should clearly define what knowledge, skills, and values learners are expected to acquire.⁷⁶ In addition, teachers should decide on the instructional strategies they will employ and the materials and resources they will use to support teaching and

⁷¹ Helena Harrison et al., "Case Study Research: Foundations and Methodological Orientations," in *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 18, 2017.

⁷² Ilker Etikan, "Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling," *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>.

⁷³ Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, "Teaching Thematic Analysis: Overcoming Challenges and Developing Strategies for Effective Learning," *The Psychologist* 26, no. 2 (2013): 120–23.

⁷⁴ Adrian Benton, Glen Coppersmith, and Mark Dredze, "Ethical Research Protocols for Social Media Health Research," in *Proceedings of the First ACL Workshop on Ethics in Natural Language Processing* (Valencia, Spain: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2017), 94–102.

⁷⁵ Xaydarova, "Importance Of Lesson Plans In Teaching Process."

⁷⁶ Angaiz, Jabeen, and Karim, "Perceptions Of Experienced And Novice Teachers About The Importance Of Lesson Planning For Effective Learning In Private Elementary Schools Of Gilgit City."

learning.⁷⁷ Resources and materials are critical as they help learners comprehend the abstract concepts embedded in the Economics curriculum.⁷⁸

Participant A:

Before delivering my lessons, I plan on the topic of the lesson and derive the objectives from the topic so that I am clear on what I expect my learners to be able to do after the lesson.

Although Participant A had asserted this in his interview, when the researchers asked for a copy of the lesson plan, they discovered it was a pre-planned lesson downloaded from a particular website. The pre-planned lesson did not cater for the contextual factors in which the teacher was teaching.

Participant B agreed with participant A about the importance of lesson planning, adding:

Planning is pivotal in my lesson delivery as it helps me to visualise how the lesson will unfold, anticipate possible challenges, and how I will overcome them. Planning also helps me to decide on the forms of assessment I will implement in the class.

Planning also aids teachers in terms of resources to be used in the lesson, as Participant C posited:

Planning assists me in deciding when to do what at each stage of the lesson and choosing the resources to use.

The practices of the participants are in concurrence with literature which states that it is vital for the teacher to be clear on what they expect learners to be able to do after the instruction.⁷⁹ Determining objectives, the resources to be used, and the forms of assessment to be implemented is also in line with the MLE theory parameter of intentionality. The teacher deliberately determines what they want their learners to be able to do after instruction. However, as much as Participant A had lesson plans, the relevancy issue arose as the resources stated in his pre-planned lesson plan were not at his disposal.

Selection of Curriculum Resources

Concerning how participants practice with respect to resources, the following data was generated:

Participant A:

I use YouTube, TikTok, and Khan Academy video presentations as resources in my teaching.

When the researchers probed on how this practice was helpful, Participant A retorted:

Nowadays, learners are inclined to technology, so if one does not embrace it [technology], one will never get the best out of these learners.

Participant A's assertions show his awareness of the 'Gen Z' bias toward technology. He uses social media platforms that appeal to learners to explain and deliver Economics content. This shows intentionality on the part of the teacher to solicit reciprocity from learners. The teacher knows that the subject has to be taught interestingly and not as dry and monotonous as the literature has reported.⁸⁰

In concurrence with participant A, participant B said:

Besides using the textbook and newspapers, I have also adopted the use of ICT; I use projectors, online quizzes, WhatsApp, TikTok, and other social media platforms in my teaching practices.

⁷⁷ Li and Zou, "A Study of EFL Teacher Expertise in Lesson Planning."

⁷⁸ Xaydarova, "Importance Of Lesson Plans In Teaching Process."

⁷⁹ Xaydarova, "Importance Of Lesson Plans In Teaching Process."

⁸⁰ Asarta, Chambers, and Harter, "Teaching Methods in Undergraduate Introductory Economics Courses: Results From a Sixth National Quinquennial Survey"; Buchs et al., "Challenges for Cooperative Learning Implementation: Reports from Elementary School Teachers."

Extending the importance of carefully selecting resources was participant C, who echoed:

In addition to ICTs such as laptops and projectors, I make use of copies of activities and newspaper articles to augment some of the available textbooks as some concepts in the textbooks, like the Balance of Payments, have changed their format.

From the participants' assertions, it can be argued that teachers deliberately select instructional resources that motivate and keep learners' attention. This was also witnessed in the observed lessons; for instance, participant A played a video from Khan Academy on the causes of market failures. The moment the video started playing, the researchers observed that all learners were glued to the video as it had captured their attention. The selection of resources that capture the learners' attention is in unison with what is documented in the literature.⁸¹ The deliberate use of pleasant and attractive resources that appeal to the learners makes the content (stimuli) interesting.⁸²

Learner-Centred Practices

The following were the participants' responses on the theme of learner-centred practices.

Participant A responded:

As teachers, we need to employ approaches and strategies that create opportunities for our learners to participate in class.

Adding to this, participant B offered a much more detailed response by postulating that:

We need to create an enabling environment where learners can independently learn and discover new knowledge. This will make learning interesting as they [learners] will feel proud that they are in control of their learning.

The train of thought of associating learner-centred practices with effective teaching is collaborated by literature such as Zhou et al.⁸³ The participants acknowledge the power of making learners active participants in their learning by intentionally creating opportunities for learners to discover knowledge on their own.

Contrary to Participants A and B, participant C seemed to have a different view:

It is difficult to use learner-centred approaches and strategies in this subject. The chalk-and-talk method works for me as it enables me to explain abstract concepts and cover the syllabus in the stipulated time.

Considering the above responses, it is evident that some teachers are utilising learner-centred approaches and strategies where learners actively interact with the content, their peers, and teachers, as espoused by Zhou et al.⁸⁴ Participants A and B's assertions and the effect of their actions in the lessons observed by the researchers suggest that learner-centred approaches are more effective than traditional approaches. Learners could be seen collaborating and learning from each other. This approach enables learners to be meaningfully engaged in their learning and see the relevance of what they are learning (mediation of meaning), which is one of the parameters of MLE.⁸⁵ However, participant C's response sharply contrasts the views of Participants A and B. His response suggests that some teachers are still clamouring for teacher-centred practices. Her belief is unsurprising as

⁸¹ Thamrin et al., "The Effectiveness of the Hybrid Learning Materials with the Application of Problem Based Learning Model (Hybrid-PBL) to Improve Learning Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic."

⁸² Esther B. Isman and David. Tzuriel, "The Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) in a Three Generational Perspective," *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 26, no. 4 (November 23, 2008): 545–60, <https://doi.org/10.1348/026151007X269786>.

⁸³ Xiaodan Zhou, Ling-Hsiu Chen, and Chin-Ling Chen, "Collaborative Learning by Teaching: A Pedagogy between Learner-Centered and Learner-Driven," *Sustainability* 11, no. 4 (February 22, 2019): 1174, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11041174>.

⁸⁴ Zhou, Chen, and Chen, "Collaborative Learning by Teaching: A Pedagogy between Learner-Centered and Learner-Driven."

⁸⁵ Isman and Tzuriel, "The Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) in a Three Generational Perspective."

available literature captures that some teachers still dominate classroom proceedings and relegate learners to mere spectators.⁸⁶

Feedback Practices

The Victoria State Government postulates that feedback practices should be regular, positive, and practical.⁸⁷ The purpose of feedback should be to narrow the gap in the learners' general mindset that Economics concepts are complex.⁸⁸ The effectiveness of teaching can only be determined by assessing the learners' learning progress. Feedback enhances teaching and learning effectiveness during and after instruction.⁸⁹ Teachers play a crucial role in determining learners' learning progress and in providing feedback to the learners. It is imperative to understand how Economics teachers carry out assessment practices in their classrooms.⁹⁰

The participants had this to say about their feedback practices.

Participant A:

My feedback practices differ, but mostly I engage in face-to-face individualised and group feedback in class.

He continued:

Once my learners write an activity or informal test, I give them feedback immediately whilst the questions are still vivid in their minds. This helps to correct misconceptions.

Participant B added:

I use a hybrid approach; sometimes, I provide impromptu verbal feedback when I have given classwork. I also load online responses if I have administered online quizzes so that my learners get immediate feedback. I, however, also make use of written feedback, especially on essay writing.

The practice by Participant B of using online assessments is in line with current curriculum practices where teaching and learning are not only confined to the classroom.⁹¹ Given that the current generation is biased toward technology, using quizzes through laptops and other electronic gadgets allows learners to use familiar devices and learn whilst playing.⁹²

Just as participants A and B had echoed, participant C stated:

My feedback practices vary. Sometimes I give group feedback, and at times I give individualised scheduled feedback, especially to those learners that I would have identified to be at risk.

When the researchers probed on why he was doing this, he had this to say:

Sometimes a learner at risk might have improved, although they might still have obtained a low mark. This needs to be praised so that they keep on working hard.

⁸⁶ Asarta, Chambers, and Harter, "Teaching Methods in Undergraduate Introductory Economics Courses: Results From a Sixth National Quinquennial Survey."

⁸⁷ Victoria State Government-Education and Training, "Effective Assessment," 2022, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Pages/insight-effective.aspx#:~:text=Effective assessment.>

⁸⁸ Merta Simbolon, Anderias Henukh, and Rikardus Feribertus Nikat, "Correlation Between Mastery of Concepts and Argumentation Skills of High School Students," in *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Social Sciences (ICSS 2020)* (Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201014.090>.

⁸⁹ Yan and Boud, "Conceptualising Assessment-as-Learning."

⁹⁰ Ernest Larbi and Okyere Mavis, "The Use of Manipulatives in Mathematics Education.," *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no. 36 (2016): 53–61.

⁹¹ Andi Mursidi, Buyung Buyung, and Eka Murdani, "Digital Literacy Competence Levels of Indonesian Junior High School Students Based on Activities Through The 5m Approach," *JETL (Journal of Education, Teaching and Learning)* 7, no. 2 (November 24, 2022): 229, <https://doi.org/10.26737/jetl.v7i2.3775>.

⁹² Aprianti and Sahid, "The Relationship between Teachers' Competency and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Learning among Economics Teachers."

Participant C's practice shows the teacher's intention to motivate her learners to perform better. This practice often results in learners working hard to improve their academic performance. Providing immediate and individualised feedback impacts learners' academic achievement and motivation positively.⁹³

Reflective Practices

Reflective teaching practices analyse how something was taught and how the teacher might improve or change their practice for better learning outcomes.⁹⁴ It means teachers reflect on their actions and decisions during instruction to improve their practice.⁹⁵ When teachers engage in the process of reflection, they create a pathway for improving their classroom practice, consequently improving academic achievement.⁹⁶

Participant A:

I reflect as the lesson unfolds so that if my initial plan is not working, I can quickly modify and adapt to my learners' needs.

As is documented by Albreiki et al. who state that teachers should continuously interrogate their actions, participant A's assertion indicates concurrence with the literature as he asserts that he is always alert to how his learners respond to the stimuli as the lesson progresses.⁹⁷ He is not rigid and does not wait until the end of the lesson to modify his teaching practices to suit his learners' needs. His actions are also in line with the parameters of intentionality and reciprocity as he keeps checking whether what he intended to achieve in the lesson is still on course to be completed and whether learners are responding to the stimuli.

Participant B:

At my school, we are encouraged to invite our peers to observe our lessons and then offer each other feedback. This feedback helps one to reflect on their practice.

Participant C:

After every lesson, I sit and think back about what transpired in my class and evaluate whether the teaching strategies and assessment techniques I chose enabled me to achieve the lesson objectives.

The practices of the participants are in line with what Mathew et al. postulate that given the complexity of teaching, there is a need for teachers to question their practices for them to develop professionally.⁹⁸ The participants intentionally used different forms of reflection at various stages of their lesson to improve their practice and enhance its effectiveness. These practices are incongruent with what researchers such as Léon-Henri advocate for, as it results in teachers improving their teaching practices.⁹⁹

Discussion Summary

The study findings revealed that some teachers, practices on instructional planning, selection of resources, feedback, and reflective practices promoted effective teaching, which aligns with MLE

⁹³ Nkoja C. Khechane, Mamocheta C. Makara, and Awelani M. Rambuda, "Primary Mathematics Teachers' Assessment Practices in the Context of the Integrated Primary Curriculum in Lesotho," *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education* 24, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 41–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18117295.2020.1735672>.

⁹⁴ Priya Mathew, Prasanth Mathew, and P J Peechattu, "Reflective Practices: A Means to Teacher Development," *Asia Pacific Journal of Contemporary Education and Communication Technology* 3, no. 1 (2017): 126–31.

⁹⁵ Léon-Henri, "Valorizing Cultural and Linguistic Capital through Assessment Practices in Tertiary Transnational Contexts."

⁹⁶ Aprianti and Sahid, "The Relationship between Teachers' Competency and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Learning among Economics Teachers."

⁹⁷ Albreiki, Habuza, and Zaki, "Framework for Automatically Suggesting Remedial Actions to Help Students at Risk Based on Explainable ML and Rule-Based Models."

⁹⁸ Mathew, Mathew, and Peechattu, "Reflective Practices: A Means to Teacher Development."

⁹⁹ Léon-Henri, "Valorizing Cultural and Linguistic Capital through Assessment Practices in Tertiary Transnational Contexts."

theory parameters of intentionality, reciprocity, mediation of meaning, and transcendence. However, some teachers are still clinging to the traditional teacher-centred approach in their daily classroom practice. They have challenges when it comes to instructional planning, accessing, and utilising ICT resources and lack pedagogical content knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored high school Economics teachers' curriculum implementation practices. Findings revealed that although there are pockets of good teaching practices in Economics curriculum implementation in the selected schools, more still needs to be done to improve the Economics teachers' practices. It is, therefore, recommended that there should be continuous in-service training of teachers on how to plan lessons to cater for diverse learners, how to use learner-centred teaching approaches and strategies, and how to use the available ICT resources to benefit the learners. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate so that they can develop each other to become effective in their curriculum implementation practices.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore high school Economics teachers' curriculum implementation practices in South Africa. The views of three participants, purposefully selected from three schools in the Northern Cape province were sought to throw more light on the subject under investigation. The Economics teachers' curriculum implementation practices revealed in this study are remarkable, however, teachers should continuously strive to improve their curriculum implementation practices. The emphasis on economics-specific professional development activities can never be overstated as these activities may assist Economics teachers in deepening their content knowledge, widening their awareness of learners' needs, and aiding them in the curriculum implementation practices to ensure learners' success.

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