



# An Assessment of Secondary School Learners' Performance in Economics in the OR Tambo Inland District, Eastern Cape Province South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the factors that influence learners' performance in economics as a subject. This study used a mixed methodology which combined qualitative and quantitative methods, providing a more thorough comprehension of the study problem. The qualitative method was employed to collect data through interviews with teachers. The quantitative method was also used to collect data through questionnaires from learners and teachers. The study targeted four economics teachers within the school and 15 learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase with different socioeconomic backgrounds and academic abilities. The results of this study revealed that the lack of motivation, and time allocated for studying economics is very limited to cover the workload and the lack of teachers who are experienced in teaching economics. Results focused on student interest in the subject, teacher skills and specialization, and degrees of knowledge regarding the benefits of studying economics as factors that influence their performance. The study recommends that teachers should motivate and enlighten learners about the benefits of Economics and school authorities should appoint only qualified and competent teachers to teach Economics and there should be language policies to deal with language proficiency. This study adds to existing literature on students' performance in Economics in South African secondary schools.

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## INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in teaching and learning have increased the need for economics, which is one of the school subjects that has gradually gained weight in both secondary and higher education institutions in South Africa and abroad as stated by Oke and Fernandes.<sup>1</sup> One reason for this is that it is widely accepted that understanding the concept of economics and being able to apply it to significant issues and difficulties are required components of being a responsible, mature citizen in any society, widespread improvements in the performance of these roles bring enormous benefits to individuals and promote national development.<sup>2</sup> Kolb and Kolb believe that factors influencing the performance of

<sup>1</sup> Adekunle Oke and Fatima Araujo Pereira Fernandes, "Innovations in Teaching and Learning: Exploring the Perceptions of the Education Sector on the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR)," *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity* 6, no. 2 (June 2020): 31, <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc6020031>.

<sup>2</sup> E.A. Hanushek, *Making Schools Work: Improving Performance and Controlling Costs* (Brookings Institution Press, 2010).

learners in Economics can be classified into several dimensions, including personal characteristics, teaching methods, curriculum design, socioeconomic status, technological advancements, and other influences such as social and cultural norms.<sup>3</sup> Idika, Onuoha, Nji, and Emmanuel claim that Economics is a very significant subject, vital for the future development of any country's economy, thus, measuring learners' academic performance in the subject is very relevant.<sup>4</sup>

There was a challenge with poor matric scores in Economics in the OR Tambo Inland District. Mabusela states that this results from improper EMS teaching in the lower classes, despite the fact that EMS serves as the basis for economics.<sup>5</sup> Johnson and Van Wyk state that this may be the result of a lack of EMS teachers since educators are overworked and underprepared for the number of subjects they teach, and the difficulty of imparting knowledge in English.<sup>6</sup>

Previous studies have revealed that the subject should be incorporated into any country's curriculum since it helps learners comprehend their role in their own economic system as customers, citizens, and future workers or employers, as stated by Ayeni and Olasunkanmi.<sup>7</sup> According to Elliott, Economics has societal importance since it teaches learners the value of independence and how to make the most of limited resources to attain long-term goals.<sup>8</sup> There were, however, concerns that Economics is not receiving the attention it needs in secondary schools because appreciating the importance of the topic would necessitate education officials creating suitable conditions for Economics learners to perform well academically. One explanation for this, as observed by Adu and Adeyanju and Idika, et al., is that teachers who specialize in other subjects usually teach Economics.<sup>9</sup> In such circumstances, the teachers tasked with instructing the learners may struggle to understand some economic concepts.

The focus of this study is to investigate the factors that influence learner performance in economics classrooms. According to Christie, the concept of integration should not be taken lightly, especially given that South Africa's existing education system is underperforming when compared to other African countries.<sup>10</sup> In line with studies, underperforming secondary schools in South Africa face ongoing performance issues, which frequently manifest as a high rate of grade repeat.<sup>11</sup>

Some existing works of literature have explored factors affecting student performance in Economics in schools as stated by Elliot and have identified several factors affecting the performance, such as poor methods of teaching, inadequate teaching resources, negative attitude of both learners and teachers to subjects and unqualified economics teachers.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Mphale and Mhlauli illustrated that isolated low staff morale is a negative influential factor in learners' academic performance.<sup>13</sup> The findings of research by Limbe showed that teachers' subject knowledge, relationships with learners,

<sup>3</sup> Alice Y. Kolb and David A. Kolb, "Experiential Learning Theory: A Dynamic, Holistic Approach to Management Learning, Education and Development," in *The SAGE Handbook of Management Learning, Education and Development* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009), 42–68, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857021038.n3>.

<sup>4</sup> Ezinne Idika et al., "Determinants of Academic Achievement in Economics in Public Secondary Schools in Nsukka Local Government Area Enugu State, Nigeria," *International Journal of Economics Education Research (IJEER)* 1, no. 1 (2018): 75–92.

<sup>5</sup> Sabelo Petros Mabusela, "The Challenges of Curriculum Changes in Teaching Economic and Management Sciences in Schools in the Umhlatuze Circuit" (University of Zululand, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Lionel Johnson and Michael M. Van Wyk, *Approaches to Teaching EMS: The Teacher-Centred Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> A. O. Ayeni and O S Olasunkanmi, "Relationship between Student Learning Factors and Their Learning Outcome in Senior Secondary School Economics in Osun State Public Secondary Schools, Nigeria," *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 6, no. 2 (2015): 159–68.

<sup>8</sup> Karla Elliott, "Caring Masculinities: Theorizing an Emerging Concept," *Men and Masculinities* 19, no. 3 (2016): 240–59.

<sup>9</sup> Emmanuel O Adu and H I Adeyanju, "Home and School Factors as Determinant of Students' Achievement in Senior Secondary School Economics in Botswana," *ARNP Journal of Science and Technology* 3, no. 2 (2013): 219–23; Idika et al., "Determinants of Academic Achievement in Economics in Public Secondary Schools in Nsukka Local Government Area Enugu State, Nigeria."

<sup>10</sup> P. H. Christie, "Improving School Quality in South Africa: A Study of Schools That Have Succeeded against the Odds," *Journal of Education* 26 (2001): 40–65.

<sup>11</sup> N. Taylor, "How Can School Performance Be Improved?," Jet Education Services, 2007, <https://www.jet.org.za/resources/TaylorHowcanSchoolPerformanceBeImproved.ppt/view>.

<sup>12</sup> A.B. Elliott, "The Reasons for Poor Academic Performance of Learners in Economics in Ondo State Secondary Schools in Ese- Odo Local Government," 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Luke Moloko Mphale and Mavis B. Mhlauli, "An Investigation on Students Academic Performance for Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana," *European Journal of Educational Research* volume-5-2016494, no. volume3-issue3.html (July 15, 2014): 111–27, <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.3.3.111>.

and communication abilities had a significant impact on learners' success in Economics.<sup>14</sup> These findings demonstrated that learner, teacher, school and Department of Education-related characteristics, had a negative impact on achievement. According to the current researcher, so far, there has been little discussion about factors that influence learners' performance in economics which should be very relevant since it guides interventions that various stakeholders may make to design a turnaround plan that will guarantee a better pass rate in the district.

This study seeks to add to the continuing discussion on enhancing economics education and encouraging learners to have a deeper understanding of the subject by combining existing information along with fresh perspectives and understanding of the causes of learners' fluctuating performance in economics and providing solutions for improving learners' performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Learners' Performance in Economics

In an investigation into the factors that influence learners' academic achievement in Economics in selected senior secondary schools, Arema discovered that learners' performance is influenced by their interest in the subject, teacher qualification and competence, availability and use of relevant textbooks in economics, examination practice, and enlightenment about the benefits of studying economics.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Elliott explored why secondary school learners in Economics performed badly academically and discovered that key teaching tools were either unavailable, insufficient, or outdated.<sup>16</sup> The study suggested that the government, parents, and teachers should all play an active role in improving children's performance in Economics.

When Adu and Adeyanju studied the factors influencing learners' performance in Economics in Botswana, they identified that a combination of circumstances from both the learners' families and their schools had an impact on their academic achievement.<sup>17</sup> To ensure that learners receive feedback when it is needed, the authors recommended that teachers carry out their supervisory tasks of providing exercises and marking them immediately. Parents were also encouraged to take a positive attitude regarding their children's academic performance. Mphale and Mhlauli declare that research on junior secondary school learners' academic performance, and low grades can be associated with low staff morale and learners who are underprepared for exams.<sup>18</sup> They suggested that increased teacher morale, resource accessibility, and parental involvement are critical to obtaining high-quality grades in Economics. However, this is difficult to implement because some parents are uneducated and cannot assist learners with their academics in order to improve their academic performance in economics.

### The Impact of Teachers on Learners' Performance

According to Kpolovie, Joe, and Okoto, the competence and effectiveness of teachers play a significant role in student performance.<sup>19</sup> Factors such as teacher experience, subject knowledge, teaching style, and enthusiasm can all influence how well learners grasp economic concepts and apply them. Chibueze's research in the Izzi Local Government Area found that underqualified teachers, poor teaching methods, a lack of instructional materials, negative attitudes, and low interest among teachers and learners all have a negative impact on secondary school Economics teaching and learning.<sup>20</sup> The recommendation was that the Ministry of Education hire Economics teachers based on merit, and only

<sup>14</sup> Brighton Daniel Limbe, "Factors Affecting Student Performance in Certificate of Secondary Education Examination in Tanzania: A Case of Newala District in Mtwara Region" (The Open University of Tanzania, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> B.I. Arema, "Determinants of Learners' Academic Performance in Economics in Selected Secondary Schools in Kaduna State" (University of Ilorin, Nigeria., 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Elliott, "The Reasons for Poor Academic Performance of Learners in Economics in Ondo State Secondary Schools in Ese- Odo Local Government."

<sup>17</sup> Adu and Adeyanju, "Home and School Factors as Determinant of Students' Achievement in Senior Secondary School Economics in Botswana."

<sup>18</sup> Mphale and Mhlauli, "An Investigation on Students Academic Performance for Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana."

<sup>19</sup> Peter James Kpolovie, Andy Igho Joe, and Tracy Okoto, "Academic Achievement Prediction: Role of Interest in Learning and Attitude towards School," *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 2014, 73–100.

<sup>20</sup> O Chibueze, "Factors Affecting the Effective Studying of Economics in Secondary Schools in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State," *National Teachers Institute Ebonyi State University Study Centre, Abakaliki. Retrieved May 10 (2014): 2018.*

those who have completed the course should be appointed. David's study on the assessment of factors that affect learners' academic performance in selected secondary schools in Sumbawanga District discovered that learners' performance was influenced by a lack of English language competency, insufficient teaching and learning materials, an insufficient number of teachers, the absence of library facilities, parents' low income, and long walking distances to school.<sup>21</sup> However, poor performance remains an issue, as do learners' limited English proficiency as a result of the geographic area in which they live, making it difficult for them to understand some economic concepts.

### **Learners and Teachers' Engagement in Influencing the Performance in Economics Subject**

According to Rajabalee opinion learners' engagement with the content of the subject has a big influence on their performance.<sup>22</sup> Kpolovie, Joe and Okoto claim that academic performance and the amount of effort learners put into their studies can be influenced by a number of factors, including motivation, interest in economics, and the perception of economics' relevance to future aspirations.<sup>23</sup> Motivation is one of the characteristics that influences learners' performance. Woolfolk defined motivation as an internal condition that generates, directs, and sustains activity.<sup>24</sup> According to the DBE, economics teachers' attitudes are heavily influenced by a lack of enthusiasm.<sup>25</sup> The truth is that the nature of economics has subject-related implications. As previously noted, the inclusion of content disciplines such as mathematics and economics also have some other mathematical topics in the Further Education and Training phase correlates to poor learner performance and conceptual understanding, resulting in poor matric results as some learners find mathematical related topics very difficult. Assan and Lumadi state that some teachers lack the motivation to confidently convey information on topics that have previously failed to achieve the desired results.<sup>26</sup> Based on Miller a teacher's perspective on what will happen in the classroom or how the subject is perceived impacts the teaching style as well as the scenarios that will take place in the classroom.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, a teacher who does not motivate learners to learn or love the subject contributes to learners losing interest in the subject which is why sometimes learners are not motivated.

According to Woolfolk, learning is inextricably connected to motivation. Motivation is often referred to as the quality that drives us to do or not do something.<sup>28</sup> A lack of motivation destroys the desire and willingness to complete economics work in the classroom, leading to economics-related difficulties when there should be none.<sup>29</sup> It limits learners' ability to be creative, inventive, and investigative, as well as to be happy with minimal effort. Individuals who are demotivated tend to settle for mediocrity. This lack of motivation would undoubtedly lead to poor results.

Anderman further adds that teachers' attitudes toward economics are influenced by their level of confidence in the subject matter.<sup>30</sup> Woolfolk believes that a well-informed economics teacher is more likely to respond positively to learners' questions and interests.<sup>31</sup> It is important to remember that teacher views regarding economics are influenced by the consistency of classroom practices and stated educational ideals.<sup>32</sup> The study suggests that an economics teacher's attitude is influenced by their commitment to the discovery of economic knowledge. An economics teacher whose goal is to be

<sup>21</sup> N. M. David, "Determinants of Poor Academic Performance of Secondary School Learners in Sumbawanga District, Tanzania" (Sokoine University of Agriculture, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Rajabalee, Banoor Yousra, Mohammad Issack Santally, and Frank Rennie. "A study of the relationship between students' engagement and their academic performance in an eLearning environment." *E-Learning and Digital Media* 17, no.1 (2020): 1-20

<sup>23</sup> Kpolovie, Joe, and Okoto, "Academic Achievement Prediction: Role of Interest in Learning and Attitude towards School."

<sup>24</sup> Anita Woolfolk, *Educational Psychology: Active Learning Edition*, 12th ed. (London: Pearson, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Department of Basic Education, *CAPS Economics. Further Education and Training Phase, Grades 10-12* (Pretoria: Department of Education, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Edwin Buabeng Assan and Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi, "Facets of Integration in Economic and Management Sciences: Theory, Learning—Teaching, Assessment and Metaphor," *Journal of Social Sciences* 32, no. 3 (2012): 255–64.

<sup>27</sup> J. S. Miller, "Impact of Previous Knowledge and Experience on the Entrepreneurial Attitudes of Learners," *South African Journal of Education* 25, no. 2 (2007): 89–94.

<sup>28</sup> Woolfolk, *Educational Psychology: Active Learning Edition*.

<sup>29</sup> Hanushek, *Making Schools Work: Improving Performance and Controlling Costs*.

<sup>30</sup> E. M. Anderman and L. H. Anderman, *Classroom Motivation* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Woolfolk, *Educational Psychology: Active Learning Edition*.

<sup>32</sup> Christie, "Improving School Quality in South Africa: A Study of Schools That Have Succeeded against the Odds."

always up to date with economics knowledge will possess a positive attitude towards the subject Harden.<sup>33</sup>

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Within the bounds of fundamental confining assumptions, theories are developed to verify and expand on known information as well as to explain, anticipate, and comprehend occurrences. A theoretical framework can uphold or support a research study's argument and shows comprehension of ideas and theories pertinent to the subject at hand.

Paul, Bodson and Ridde state that to perform is to generate valuable results, hence performance theory serves as the theoretical foundation for this study.<sup>34</sup> An individual who is making an effort with a specific result is called a performer. This study draws important insights from the scholarly work of DeNisi and Sonesh, who expanded on the idea of performance.<sup>35</sup> The study's central research issue, which aims to identify the variables influencing learners' success in economics in further education and training, makes the theory of performance crucial. According to Schechner, if the performance theory is used in the study's context, there are actually two performers in this scenario: the teacher and the student.<sup>36</sup> The theory of performance's components will be implemented in accordance with the student's and instructors' respective levels of economics knowledge. Both the teacher's and the learners' degree of knowledge can have an impact on how well the learners do. Six components of teaching and learning are discussed in the theory of performance theory.<sup>37</sup> Context, knowledge, skill, and identity levels, as well as fixed and personal factors number eleven, are the components. These ideas are developed and connected by the theory of performance to create a framework for understanding both performance and performance improvements. Schechner asserts that performance is the generation of worthwhile outcomes.<sup>38</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method approach to investigate the factors influencing learners' performance in economics. This study first used a qualitative data approach in gathering and analyzing data, then quantitative data. The qualitative method was used to collect data through interviews with teachers. The quantitative method was also used to collect data through questionnaires from both teachers and learners. The participants of this study comprised all four teachers teaching economics and 15 learners studying economics in one selected school in the OR Tambo District. The sample was diverse including learners from different from grade 10 and learners from grade 11 with different socio-economic backgrounds and academic abilities. This study used a sequential explanatory design. In order to explain or expand on findings, gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires to a large sample of learners and teachers including questions on demographics, study habits, attendance, and academic performance. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews to assess in-depth possible factors that influence the performance of learners. Ten weeks of classroom time were dedicated to the data collection procedure, which provided a thorough understanding of the factors influencing learners' performance in the economics subject.

### Data Analysis

According to Ngulube, data analysis is the systematic application of logical and statistical techniques to describe, summarize, and evaluate data gathered for a study.<sup>39</sup> It enables researchers to make sense

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<sup>33</sup> Harden, Ronald M. "The integration ladder: a tool for curriculum planning and evaluation." *Medical Education-Oxford*- 34, no. 7 (2000): 551-557

<sup>34</sup> Elisabeth Paul, Oriane Bodson, and Valéry Ridde, "What Theories Underpin Performance-Based Financing? A Scoping Review," *Journal of Health Organization and Management* 35, no. 3 (May 5, 2021): 344–81, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHOM-04-2020-0161>.

<sup>35</sup> Angelo S DeNisi and Shirley Sonesh, "The Appraisal and Management of Performance at Work.," 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Paul, Bodson, and Ridde, "What Theories Underpin Performance-Based Financing? A Scoping Review."

<sup>38</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*.

<sup>39</sup> Patrick Ngulube, "Qualitative Data Analysis and Interpretation: Systematic Search for Meaning," *Addressing Research Challenges: Making Headway for Developing Researchers* 131, no. 156 (2015): 681–94.

of raw information, identify patterns and relationships, and determine whether the data supports the research questions or hypotheses.<sup>40</sup>

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 15 learners and 4 teachers. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics with Microsoft Excel. The analysis included frequency counts and percentage distributions, which allowed for the identification of trends and patterns in participants' responses. Tables and figures were used to present the data clearly and to facilitate interpretation of key findings.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with four Economics teachers. These data were analysed thematically using open coding techniques as described by Hesse-Biber and Leavy.<sup>41</sup> This process involved a systematic examination of the interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns, categories, and emerging themes related to learner performance.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

Four teachers were interviewed in one selected school at OR Tambo district, the coding of participants is as follows:

IR – Interview Respondent

IR1 answered the interview questions:

### **How long have you been involved in the teaching of Economics?**

- *I have been teaching economics for 9 years now.*

### **What personal traits or characteristics do you think mostly impact learners' performance in Economics?**

- *"An ability to manage time, prioritize tasks, and maintain accurate records, ensuring timely completion of assignments and preparation for the exam I think those are the more crucial aspects that impact our learners in our school."*

### **Do you think socioeconomic background plays a role in learners' performance in Economics? If so, how?**

- *"Yes, for example, I have seen that learners with parents with higher socioeconomic status are mostly likely to be involved in their children's education, providing guidance and support in economics-related subjects as this subject many find difficult. Other parents tend to check if their children are coping or performing well in the subject."*

### **What are the biggest challenges you see learners facing when learning Economics?**

- *"One of the contributing factors is sometimes teachers from other streams who are not trained to teach economics but schools award them to teach economics. However, they don't have a deep conceptual understanding of economics, some other teachers are not well trained, and they are not motivated in the subject which sometimes contributes to challenges of learners failing economics."*

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<sup>40</sup> D. K. Remler and G. G. Van Ryzin, *Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation* (SAGE Publications, 2014), <https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=WksXBAAAQBAJ>.

<sup>41</sup> S. N. Hesse-Biber and P. Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: SAGE Publication Inc., 2011).

**In your opinion, what strategies can be implemented to improve learners' performance in Economics?**

- *“The Department of Education should hire teachers who are qualified to teach economics. Connect concepts to everyday life and current events I have been using this method the previous years and it has been helping a lot. Analyze real-world economic scenarios and cater for diverse learning styles.”*

IR2 answered the interview questions:

**How long have you been involved in the teaching of Economics?**

- *I think it is 12 years now.*

**What personal traits or characteristics do you think mostly impact learners' performance in Economics?**

- *“Numeracy and problem-solving skills are the contributing factors that impact learners' performance in Economics because from what I have observed our learners from this school really fear anything that comes with calculations or mathematics, graphs, data interpretation, and statistical analysis to understand economics models and theories this mostly disadvantages them in their overall performance in the subject and English is still a challenge for learners in economics.”*

**Do you think socioeconomic background plays a role in learners' performance in Economics? If so, how?**

- *“yes absolutely, the type of community we are teaching in here most of the people do not afford so learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds often lack access to quality educational resources, internet, and textbooks since we have many learners in our school. The textbooks that we have here cannot accommodate all our learners so sometimes parents need to also buy some for their children which they often can't afford so that is what hinders their ability to complete Economics activities.”*

**What are the biggest challenges you see learners facing when learning Economics?**

- *“I think it is difficult to see the practical application of economics and some perceive economics as a dry or complex subject, hence learners fail to achieve good marks in the subject.”*

**In your opinion, what strategies can be implemented to improve learners' performance in Economics?**

- *“We can encourage critical thinking from learners and foster teamwork and communication from their peers because not all learners are performing well in economics. There are some other learners who are doing well so we need to encourage teamwork or peer-to-peer teaching more because learners learn better if they learn from their peers and enhance critical thinking and self-assessment.”*

IR3 answered the interview questions:

**How long have you been involved in the teaching of Economics?**

- *This is my third year now. In previous years, I was teaching EMS in the senior phase.*

**What personal traits or characteristics do you think mostly impact learners' performance in Economics?**

- *“I think it is the lack of motivation with regards to the benefit of studying economics and their studies in general, economics need learners to study, and our learners do not study well they just study a day before the examination or test which that mostly affect their overall performance in the subject and not just economics alone but in all subjects and the time allocated for economics in a week is not enough to cater for the workload.”*

**Do you think socioeconomic background plays a role in learners' performance in Economics? If so, how?**

- *"Yes, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds experience stereotypes, feeling pressure to confirm negative socioeconomic stereotypes, leading to decreased motivation and performance."*

**What are the biggest challenges you see learners facing when learning Economics?**

- *"I think also the overcrowding of the classroom sometimes makes it difficult for me to attend to all learners individually, and lack of basic knowledge from lower grades so that learners should have the basic content knowledge."*

**In your opinion, what strategies can be implemented to improve learners' performance in economics?**

- *"Regularly testing maybe weekly can help to improve the learner's performance in economics so that learners won't relax each time they study a new topic they know that they should study that topic until they understand, and they will be assessed in that topic this helps to monitor learners progress and identify areas of improvement."*

IR4 answered the interview questions:

**How long have you been involved in the teaching of Economics?**

- *This is the fifth time now.*

**What personal traits or characteristics do you think mostly impact learners' performance in Economics?**

- *This response aligns with IR1. "An ability to stay focused, manage time, and meet deadlines."*

**Do you think socioeconomic background plays a role in learners' performance in economics? If so, how?**

- *"Yes, learners from wealthier backgrounds often have access to resources to enhance their understanding of economics concepts. On the other hand, learners from poor backgrounds face challenges which sometimes contribute to the overall pass of learners." This response is in line with IR2.*

**What are the biggest challenges you see learners facing when learning economics?**

- *"The unavailability of textbooks contributes to learners' challenges because they share the textbooks with their peers and there are always those learners who are unable to have the opportunity to use textbooks and other materials. Learners also like to make comments that they don't understand other teachers. I think even us teachers the kind of teaching methods we are using do not do justice to our learners to achieve good marks. Also English is a huge challenge for learners who tend to struggle in understanding English. This makes it hard to understand the information in the textbook."*

**In your opinion, what strategies can be implemented to improve learners' performance in Economics?**

- *"Learners should stop this tendency of them not wanting to study otherwise they are capable of achieving good marks."*

**Questionnaire Data**

This study administered (15) questionnaires to learners and (4) to teachers. Out of these all questionnaires were returned by teachers and learners these show a 100% return rate. The following is the quantitative data that was collected using questionnaires from 15 learners the findings are shown in a table form.

**Table 1: Quantitative data collected from learners using the questionnaire**

Question	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent	Number of participants
1. How would you rate your knowledge when comes to integration in Economics?	3	-	5	3	4	15 (100%)
2. How would you rate your English language proficiency in Economics?	8	1	3	2	1	15 (100%)
3. How would you rate the textbooks used in the economics classroom?	4	2	3	3	3	15 (100%)
4. How would you rate your knowledge of the subject of Economics ?	3	4	3	2	3	15 (100%)
5. The teacher's commitment to work will determine his/her ability to teach Economics effectively.	-	1	2	5	7	15 (100%)
6. Can the teacher's engagement or enthusiasm for Economics as a subject affect your performance?	2	1	3	4	5	15 (100%)

Key: P= poor, F= Fair, G= Good, VG= Very Good, and E= Excellent.

The above table shows that all 15 participants (learners) have answered all questions. The answers from learners were diverse and showed that many learners seem to have a problem in studying economics. The following data was collected from 4 economics teachers in one selected school in OR Tambo Inland District of Eastern Cape Province using a questionnaire, the data is presented in a table form.

**Table 2: Quantitative data collected from teachers using the questionnaire**

Question	SA	A	D	SD	Number of participants
Learners need enlightenment about the benefits of studying Economics.	4	-	-	-	4 (100%)
Frequent changes in Economics teachers do not affect the performance of students in Economics.	-	1	1	2	4 (100%)
The knowledge of EMS at the Junior Secondary level will help learners understand and perform well in Economics.	3	1	-	-	4 (100%)
Economics teachers need to motivate the learners to learn and perform well in Economics.	2	2	-	-	4 (100%)
To perform well in Economics, learners need to have an interest in the subject.	4	-	-	-	4 (100%)

Key: SA= strongly agree, A = agree, D = disagree, and SD= strongly disagree

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing learners' performance in economics at OR Tambo Eastern Cape. The research finding shows that there are many factors that influence learners' performance in economics which affect both teachers and learners.

This study found that a major aspect that might have a negative effect on learners' performance in economics is their lack of motivation for the subject. This is one of the reasons why learners struggle in economics. An absence of motivation can result in poor performance since it is crucial in determining a learner's attitude toward learning and level of engagement with the subject. According to respondents, unmotivated learner prioritizes other subjects they might find interesting, put aside studying economics, and procrastinate and the time allocated for economics is not enough. If learners are motivated, they tend to perform well in the subject. This is in line with the discovery made by Nakhla that learners' motivation determines how much work they put into their assignments and studies.<sup>42</sup> The study conducted by Remington-Doucette et al. adds that studying economics provides opportunities for critical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of theoretical knowledge to practical settings.<sup>43</sup> These negative perceptions may keep learners from realizing the significance of economics, which encourages their lack of effort and engagement. Unmotivated learners are less likely to put in the time and effort required to study for tests, review material, or work on projects.<sup>44</sup> The findings of the current study further demonstrated that learners' poor understanding of the beneficial effects of studying economics has an impact on their academic performance and that, subsequently, improvements to the environment around economics teaching are required.

Given that any teacher with the ability to teach any subject can also teach economics, some respondents expressed concern about the lack of skills among the available teachers. It may be difficult for the teacher to convey the concepts to the learners in a clear and accurate manner if they are not fully understood by them. This causes ambiguities and gaps in the knowledge of learners, which might hinder their ability to fully understand deeper topics and apply what they have learned in tests or real-world situations. In the context of Hill and Chin's research, a teacher with inadequate knowledge of the subject might not be able to recognize or deal with misconceptions, which could lead to learners interpreting things incorrectly.<sup>45</sup> According to Nilson, misconceptions continue in the absence of appropriate direction from an experienced teacher, which eventually results in poor performance on tests or assignments.<sup>46</sup> However, learners will understand more if their teacher is qualified to teach economics since they possess in-depth knowledge of the subject.

The current study's findings also showed that one important aspect that has a negative impact on how well learners perform in a subject of economics is the availability of economics textbooks in classrooms. This study found that learning resources were not adequate as seen from the viewpoint of the respondents' learners encounter many difficulties that negatively affect their learning and performance when these textbooks are not available. However, learners typically perform well when they have access to appropriate recommended textbooks. Some learners own relevant textbooks, but they choose not to read them, which causes them to perform poorly on exams. This relates to the findings of Obiezu who suggested that learners' poor academic performance in Economics at Odo State secondary school was caused by an absence of textbooks and the outdated traits of those that were available.<sup>47</sup>

The results of this study have shown that the success of learners in economics is significantly influenced by their English proficiency, especially in areas or educational systems where English is the primary language of teaching. The statements made by the respondents make it clear that learners find it more difficult to understand English easily. Reading academic papers, articles, case studies, and

<sup>42</sup> G. Nakhla, "The Relationship between Fear of Failure, Academic Motivation and Student Engagement in Higher Education: A General Linear Model" (Lancaster University, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Sonya M. Remington-Doucette et al., "Assessing Sustainability Education in a Transdisciplinary Undergraduate Course Focused on Real-world Problem Solving," *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 14, no. 4 (September 13, 2013): 404–33, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-01-2012-0001>.

<sup>44</sup> Helena Seli and Myron H. Dembo, *Motivation and Learning Strategies for College Success*, 6th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429400711>.

<sup>45</sup> Heather C Hill and Mark Chin, "Connections between Teachers' Knowledge of Students, Instruction, and Achievement Outcomes," *American Educational Research Journal* 55, no. 5 (2018): 1076–1112.

<sup>46</sup> Linda B. Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

<sup>47</sup> Obiezu, M. "Factors Affecting Students' poor Performance In Economics On Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination In Enugu North Local Government Area." Phd Diss., Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, 2018.

textbooks is a major component of studying economics. Since academic English is frequently used in these resources, learners who are not fluent in the language may find it difficult to understand. This is in accordance with Abah's assertion that learner's ability to succeed in economics is severely hindered if they experience difficulties with English language skills.<sup>48</sup> Teng goes on to say that learners may find it difficult to convey their understanding of complicated economic topics, explain economic concepts, or offer in-depth case study analysis if they lack fluency in the language.<sup>49</sup> In addition, reading comprehension, writing well, critical thinking, and analysis all depend on having a solid command of the English language when it comes to economic terminology. Limited English proficiency poses major challenges for learners in those settings, which can negatively impact their academic achievement, involvement, and engagement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research finding this study recommends that economics teachers should put in a lot of effort to motivate and educate their learners about the benefits of studying economics. Teachers should be approachable, supportive, and truly invested in their learners' achievement to foster great relationships with the learners they teach. This study suggests that teachers make adjustments to their teaching methods, curriculum design, and time management techniques to assist them complete the assigned duties within the allotted time. A well-structured curriculum that focuses on essential economics topics can help maximize the limited time available. By prioritizing key concepts, teachers can ensure that learners spend adequate time mastering the most important aspects of the subject. The study further recommends that schools should not permit teachers who are not qualified to teach economics to teach learners. Instead, teachers should stick to their areas of specialization because inadequate economics teaching has a negative influence on learners' performance. To ensure that every school can afford to buy enough textbooks for every student, the Department of Education should push for more funding for education that is specifically designated for textbook purchases. Furthermore, the study recommends that the Department of Basic Education offer workshops or training programs to teachers to help them learn how to incorporate language support into their economics lessons, especially with learners with lower literacy levels. Also, learners must be given resources that would help them better understand complex terms and concepts in economics by giving them glossaries or textbooks with explanations in both their native language and the language of instruction.

## CONCLUSION

Studying economics is crucial for individuals, societies, and governments to make informed decisions. This study has revealed that the lack of motivation, and time allocated for studying economics is very limited to cover the workload and the lack of teachers who are experienced in teaching economics is still a challenge in school. Results focused on student interest in the subject, teacher skills and specialization, and degrees of knowledge regarding the benefits of studying economics as factors that influence their performance. By addressing these factors through targeted interventions such as teacher training, resource allocation, language support, and fostering student engagement schools can create a more supportive environment for learners, improving their performance in economics and helping them succeed academically.

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<sup>48</sup> Joshua Abah Abah, "Academic Outcomes in Language-Dependent and Computation-Dependent Courses among Mathematics Education Students in a Nigerian University: Top-Achievers Still Best of Both Extremes," *Journal of Education & Social Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2018): 64–81.

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