

# Assessing the Effective Teaching Strategies used by Teachers in Overcrowded Economics Grade 12: A Case Study of a School in the OR Tambo Coastal Education District, South Africa



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## ABSTRACT

The study examined effective teaching strategies used by teachers in overcrowded Grade 12 Economics classrooms in the OR Tambo Coastal Education District, South Africa. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from a senior secondary school through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with six experienced teachers. A purposeful sample of these senior teachers was selected to participate in the study. Findings indicated that a mix of traditional and innovative strategies, such as differentiated instruction and technology integration, was used to engage students and manage large classes. However, teachers faced challenges like insufficient resources and high stress levels. The research highlights the importance of teacher adaptability and effective classroom management, recommending targeted professional development and resource allocation to enhance teaching effectiveness and improve learner outcomes.

*Keywords: Overcrowded Classrooms, Effective Teaching Strategies, Grade 12 Economics, Differentiated Instruction, Classroom Management.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Classroom overcrowding significantly hampers the effective teaching and learning of economics, presenting challenges in delivering and understanding complex concepts due to limited individual attention and interaction.<sup>1</sup> According to the Department of Basic Education, a South African public school classroom should have a learner-teacher ratio of 35:1 for secondary schools.<sup>2</sup> However, because of overcrowding in the classroom, the learner-teacher ratio in public schools, particularly in townships and rural areas, exceeds the national average.

This situation leads to negative learner behaviours and negatively influences learners' achievement in learning economics,<sup>3</sup> while lowering teachers' morale and satisfaction, making it

<sup>1</sup> Nomusa Zimu-Biyela, "Using the School Environmental Education Programme (SEEP) to Decolonise the Curriculum: Lessons from Ufasimba Primary School in South Africa," *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies-Multi-Inter- and Transdisciplinarity* 14, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 42–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18186874.2019.1614468>.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Basic Education, "Annual Report 2020/21. South African Department of Basic Education.," 2020.

<sup>3</sup> D. Nuss and R.E. Kelly Jr., "Indications and Technique of Nuss Procedure for Pectus Excavatum," *Journal of Pediatric Surgery*, 2020.

challenging to achieve educational aims in economics education.<sup>4</sup> Addressing overcrowding is crucial for enhancing the quality of economic education and teacher and learner satisfaction.

Effective teaching strategies encompass teachers' methods and techniques to enhance learning outcomes during the teaching and learning process. Key strategies include differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, formative assessment, and technology integration. Studies have highlighted the effectiveness of these strategies, for example, emphasising the importance of addressing diverse learning needs to improve educational outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Effective teaching strategies tailored to navigate the complexities of congested learning spaces, particularly in critical subjects like Grade 12 Economics, are crucial to mitigating the challenges of overcrowded classrooms.<sup>6</sup>

Molavi mentions that despite prior research efforts to enhance teaching methodologies across various disciplines, there remains a notable gap in context-specific strategies addressing the unique challenges posed by overcrowding in Grade 12 Economics classrooms.<sup>7</sup> This study, therefore, is not merely an exploration but a necessary endeavour to fill this gap and contribute to the scholarly body of knowledge. It aims to identify and analyse teaching strategies that have proven effective in such settings to significantly improve the teaching and learning experience in overcrowded environments. The importance of this study lies not just in its academic contribution but in its potential impact on fostering a more positive and productive learning environment for future economists, making it a crucial piece of research in the educational field.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The challenge of overcrowded classrooms significantly impacts teacher-student interactions, ultimately diminishing the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning, which has profound implications for achieving educational goals.<sup>8</sup> Overcrowding in classrooms reflects a systemic failure to adequately meet the needs of learners, particularly in providing sufficient classrooms, qualified teachers, and necessary facilities for a conducive learning environment.<sup>9</sup> Classroom overcrowding is not just a logistical problem; it is a multifaceted issue that affects classroom management, learner engagement, and overall educational outcomes.<sup>10</sup> Teachers in overcrowded classrooms often spend more time managing learner behavior and maintaining order rather than delivering effective instruction.<sup>11</sup> This situation is worsened because teachers must also deal with a wide range of learner abilities and learning styles, making it increasingly difficult to provide individualized attention and support.<sup>12</sup> The need to understand how teachers perceive overcrowded classrooms and how they navigate the complexities of classroom interaction is paramount.<sup>13</sup> Teachers in these settings are often forced to adopt teaching strategies that can accommodate many learners while still attempting to maintain some educational quality.<sup>14</sup> Effective

<sup>4</sup> Zimu-Biyela, "Using the School Environmental Education Programme (SEEP) to Decolonise the Curriculum: Lessons from Ufasimba Primary School in South Africa."

<sup>5</sup> J.Q. Smith, M.R. Jones, and C.D. Brown, "Advancing Managerial Evolution and Resource Management in Contemporary Business Landscapes." *Journal of Management Studies* 58 (2020): 1–25; L. Thompson, "Thompson Sampling in Machine Learning Applications." (University of British Columbia., 2019); J. Kumar and S. Davis, "Choice Modeling and Assortment Optimization in the Presence of Context Effects.," *SSRN*, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Wellington Garikai Bonga, Clever Dhewa, and Raddaoui Mounira, "Challenges Faced by Secondary School Students in Border Towns and Possible Solutions to Ensure Success and Growth: Insights from Theories," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4887844>.

<sup>7</sup> F. Molavi, "Lived Realities of University Lecturers in Large Class Contexts: A Grounded Theory Perspective," *Journal of Educational Research and Development* 30, no. 3 (2024): 87–105.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ahmad et al., "Development and Use of Simple Sequence Repeats (SSRs) Markers for Sugarcane Breeding and Genetic Studies.," *Agronomy* 8, no. 11 (2018); P. Sudrajat, "Economic Development of South Coastal Region Purworejo Regency Based on Superior Commodities," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 686, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>9</sup> I.V. Ancho, et al. "Filipino Teacher Professional Development in the New Normal," *Journal of Education* 16, no.3(2021):25–43.

<sup>10</sup> J.D. Asodike and V.C. Onyeike, "Managing Large Classes in Developing Countries," *Global Journal of Educational Research* 15, no. 1 (2016): 31–39.

<sup>11</sup> K. Walters and J. Rodriguez, "The Importance of Training and Development in Employee Performance and Evaluation," *World Wide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 3 (2017): 206–12.

<sup>12</sup> Shireen Motala and Kirti Menon, "In Search of the 'new Normal': Reflections on Teaching and Learning during Covid-19 in a South African University," *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production* 26, no. 1 (2020): 80–99.

<sup>13</sup> Sudrajat, "Economic Development of South Coastal Region Purworejo Regency Based on Superior Commodities."

<sup>14</sup> Rachel B. Mabasa-Manganyi, "Factors Influencing Foundation Phase Rural Teachers' Understanding and Practices in Selecting Inclusive Teaching Strategies," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 13, no. 1 (February 17, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v13i1.991>.

teaching necessitates conveying knowledge clearly, engaging learners actively, and managing classroom dynamics proficiently.<sup>15</sup>

Implementing effective teaching practices is crucial in enhancing learning and learner accomplishment, especially in crowded classrooms, as this increases the difficulty of managing large class numbers and various learner requirements.<sup>16</sup> Mabasa-Manganyi suggests that teachers must create ways and adopt methods that encourage learner motivation, engagement, and active learning to mitigate these problems.<sup>17</sup> Wiggins and McTighe state that teachers must provide clear objectives and guidelines, employ positive reinforcement strategies, and promote learners' independence and self-control.<sup>18</sup> Sudrajat supports the latter by asserting that teachers can encourage learner motivation and engagement, which will boost academic accomplishment, by fostering a positive and welcoming classroom environment.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, teachers can support peer-to-peer learning and the development of social skills by implementing collaborative grouping tactics.<sup>20</sup> Boivin and CohenMiller suggest that teachers can use problem-solving exercises and project-based learning to enhance their teaching methods in crowded classrooms by fostering creativity and critical thinking.<sup>21</sup> According to Lee and Patel, project-based learning has the potential to help learners retain and develop a deep knowledge of complex subjects.<sup>22</sup> To increase learner engagement and retention, teachers can also employ narrative techniques and storytelling.<sup>23</sup>

In countries like the United States, teachers have increasingly adopted innovative teaching strategies to improve learner engagement in overcrowded classrooms.<sup>24</sup> Using cooperative learning techniques, including small group activities and peer learning methods like jigsaw activities, fosters collaboration among learners and significantly enhances their levels of engagement. In Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Ghana, teachers have employed various strategies to manage overcrowded classrooms effectively. Building strong interpersonal relationships with learners is crucial, as this helps navigate classroom dynamics and creates a conducive learning environment.<sup>25</sup> It is also essential to organize instructional activities that enhance accessibility and encourage active participation from learners in large classes. A study conducted in South Africa has noted that adopting cooperative learning frameworks enhances learners' engagement and collaboration, which is particularly beneficial in overcrowded classrooms.<sup>26</sup> Targeted professional development equips teachers with the necessary skills to manage larger classes effectively. Additionally, teachers utilize various social management techniques and leverage blackboards effectively to engage learners in academic activities. Collectively, these approaches play a vital role in addressing the challenges presented by overcrowded classroom settings.

## METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a qualitative case study research methodology with semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection instrument to solicit information from the participants at the school under study.

<sup>15</sup> Nettie Boivin and Anna CohenMiller, "Breaking the 'Fourth Wall' in Qualitative Research: Participant-Led Digital Data Construction," *The Qualitative Report*, March 12, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3136>.

<sup>16</sup> Motala and Menon, "In Search of the 'new Normal': Reflections on Teaching and Learning during Covid-19 in a South African University."

<sup>17</sup> Mabasa-Manganyi, "Factors Influencing Foundation Phase Rural Teachers' Understanding and Practices in Selecting Inclusive Teaching Strategies."

<sup>18</sup> G. Wiggins and J. McTighe, "Understanding by Design. ASCD.," 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Sudrajat, "Economic Development of South Coastal Region Purworejo Regency Based on Superior Commodities."

<sup>20</sup> June Y. Lee and Sheetal J. Patel, "An Innovating Business Model for the Higher Education Sector: A Platform-Based Approach to University Career Services," *Industry and Higher Education* 34, no. 2 (April 28, 2020): 91–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422219881069>.

<sup>21</sup> Boivin and CohenMiller, "Breaking the 'Fourth Wall' in Qualitative Research: Participant-Led Digital Data Construction."

<sup>22</sup> Lee and Patel, "An Innovating Business Model for the Higher Education Sector: A Platform-Based Approach to University Career Services."

<sup>23</sup> Wiggins and McTighe, "Understanding by Design. ASCD."

<sup>24</sup> W.A. Orina, S. Macharia, and E.N. Okpalaenwe, "Managing Overcrowded Classrooms to Accommodate Learner-Centered Methodologies," *International Journal Corner* 9, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>25</sup> R. Chetty, J. N. Friedman, and J. E. Rockoff, "Measuring the Impacts of Teachers: Better Evaluations to Improve Education," in *The Economics of Education* (Elsevier, 2014), 59–77.

<sup>26</sup> David Matsepe, Mugwena Maluleke, and Michael Cross, "Understanding Teacher Identity within Subjectivity and Agency: Implications for an African Pedagogical Advancement," *African Renaissance* 16, no. Special Issue 3 (2019): 121–32.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, and the collected data were presented in a non-verbatim format. The population comprised 24 teachers, and a sample of 6 senior teachers was purposively selected to participate in the study. The participants were purposively selected on the basis that they would provide rich data that the researchers were looking for. The data analysis was done through content analysis and presented thematically. The researchers selected this type of data analysis to ensure the straightforward presentation of data and easy reading and comprehension of the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researchers began by applying for ethical clearance approval by following the institution's processes. Informed consent was sought in order to protect the participants' rights, and part of that process included outlining the objectives of the study and any prospective benefits (or lack thereof). The participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous and that they could leave the study without consequences.

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

The study findings are presented in this section. The participants expressed quite a number of views in relation to effective teaching strategies in the overcrowded economics classroom. Based on the findings, themes were developed to ensure a clear presentation of findings:

#### **Flexible Instructional Approaches**

Teachers reported that they employ a range of strategies to ensure their instruction is inclusive and dynamic, utilising a combination of whole-class activities, effective questioning techniques, and brief assessments to gauge learner comprehension.

FT-1 described a method of instruction where learners first read a specific topic and then present it to a peer, with the teacher adding additional information. This is what she had to say:

*Well, the first thing I allow them to read is a specific topic, then one or two learners get to present that topic to another learner. There, as a teacher, I add more information. Then, an example of it is a presentation.*

FT-2 preferred an interactive teaching style, emphasising the importance of moving around the classroom to engage with learners and assess their understanding, especially in an overcrowded setting. This is what she had to say:

*I enjoy moving around while teaching and prefer to navigate through the classroom. This allows me to engage directly with my learners and assess their understanding of the topics I am presenting. Since the class is somewhat overcrowded, I make a point to walk between the desks so everyone can hear me.*

MT-1 highlighted that using a learner-centred approach is an effective strategy to address individual learning needs, emphasising the importance of asking questions to gauge understanding and identify areas requiring additional support, particularly in the Economics curriculum. They stated:

*One effective strategy is to use a learner-centred approach. This method involves asking learners questions to gauge their understanding and identify areas where they need assistance. Since it's not feasible to help each learner individually, this approach allows you to pinpoint specific topics within the Economics curriculum where learners struggle. By doing so, you can bridge the gaps in their knowledge and provide support where it's needed most between classes.*

The participants describe strategies to promote engagement and understanding in overcrowded classrooms. One teacher encourages active participation by assigning learners to read a specific topic and then present it to peers while the teacher supplements the information, creating an interactive learning environment. Another teacher emphasises the importance of moving around the classroom to engage directly with learners, ensuring everyone can hear and participate despite the crowded setting. A third strategy involves a learner-centered approach, where the teacher uses targeted questioning to gauge learners' understanding and identify areas where they struggle, particularly within the Economics

curriculum. This approach helps the teacher focus on areas that need attention, improving comprehension and filling knowledge gaps in a crowded classroom setting.

### **Cooperative Learning Techniques**

Some teachers have noted that group work and peer learning are essential in overcrowded classrooms. They organise learners into small groups to collaborate on tasks, enabling them to learn from one another. This approach eases the teacher's instructional workload and promotes active participation and interaction among learners.

MT-1 emphasised the importance of cooperative learning techniques in managing an overcrowded classroom, using small groups or pairs to encourage collaboration, problem-solving, and peer support while alleviating the challenge of providing individual attention to all learners. She had to say this:

*In an overcrowded classroom, cooperative learning techniques are essential for keeping learners engaged and helping them learn from each other. I often put learners into small groups or pairs to discuss topics, solve problems, and share their ideas. This not only makes the lesson more interactive but also gives learners the chance to help each other understand the material. With so many learners, it's hard for me to provide individual attention, so having them work in groups takes some of the pressure off and allows everyone to participate actively.*

Similarly, the participant described assigning specific roles within groups, such as a 'discussion leader,' 'recorder,' and 'presenter,' to ensure that all learners are engaged, responsible, and accountable while giving quieter learners a chance to contribute meaningfully. FT-2 stated:

*One technique I use is assigning specific roles within each group, like having a 'discussion leader,' a 'recorder,' and a 'presenter.' This way, every learner is responsible and feels accountable, which keeps them on task and involved. It's also a way for quieter learners to contribute, as they have a clear role and purpose within their group.*

FT-3 noted that cooperative learning encourages active participation and fosters a sense of community among learners, making them more comfortable sharing ideas and supporting one another despite the challenges of an overcrowded classroom. Here is what she said:

*I've found that cooperative learning also fosters a sense of community. When learners feel comfortable working together, they're more willing to share their ideas and support each other's knowledge. Even though the classroom is overcrowded, this approach helps me create a more inclusive environment where learners feel engaged and responsible for their learning.*

The participant describes using cooperative learning techniques to promote engagement and peer support in an overcrowded classroom. The teacher fosters interaction by grouping learners to discuss topics, solve problems, and share ideas, which reduces the challenge of providing individual attention. Assigning specific roles within groups, such as discussion leader, recorder, and presenter, helps ensure each learner participates and feels accountable. This approach encourages active involvement and supports quieter learners in contributing meaningfully. The participants note that cooperative learning builds a sense of community and inclusiveness, as learners feel more comfortable sharing ideas and assisting each other, making it an effective strategy in a crowded classroom setting.

### **Use of Technology and Multimedia Resources**

Incorporating technology in overcrowded classrooms can significantly enhance learners' engagement. Teachers have found that using videos, slideshows, and interactive apps effectively captures learners' attention and makes lessons more visually stimulating. For instance, video demonstrations and virtual simulations add depth to the lesson, keeping learners engaged even when individual teacher attention is limited. Moreover, multimedia resources enable learners to process information in diverse ways, catering to various learning preferences and helping them stay focused.

MT-2 preferred playing videos directly in the classroom rather than sending individual links to learners, as this method promotes interactive discussions, real-time engagement, and a collaborative learning environment where learners can ask questions and share their insights. He stated:

*Rather than sending my learners individual links to the video, I would prefer to play the video directly in the classroom. This approach would allow us to watch it together and foster a more interactive discussion afterwards. By engaging with the content collectively, we can share our thoughts and insights in real-time, encouraging a richer dialogue and a deeper understanding of economic terms. This method also creates an environment where learners can ask questions and provide their perspectives immediately, enhancing the learning experience.*

Similarly, another participant explained using slides with key points and images to help learners follow the lesson more easily, particularly in an overcrowded classroom, ensuring that all learners, including those at the back, remain engaged and can access the material. MT-3 stated:

*I'll create slides featuring key points and images that I can project, ensuring that learners can easily follow along, even in a crowded room. This approach helps keep everyone on the same page and allows learners who may have difficulty hearing or seeing from the back to stay engaged with the lesson.*

FT-1 highlighted the transformative role of technology and multimedia resources in maintaining engagement in an overcrowded classroom, using tools like videos, slideshows, and interactive apps to make lessons more dynamic and accessible, particularly in subjects like Economics. She stated:

*Using technology and multimedia resources in an overcrowded classroom has been a game-changer for keeping learners engaged. I often use videos, slideshows, and sometimes interactive apps that help bring the lessons to life. For example, in subjects where visual aids can deepen understanding, such as Economics, showing a short video or animation grabs their attention. It makes the material more accessible, even in the back of the room.*

The participant emphasises that technology and multimedia resources can effectively enhance engagement in overcrowded classrooms. By incorporating videos, slideshows, and interactive apps, teachers can make lessons more visually appealing and accessible, which helps learners better understand the material. Projected presentations enable all learners to follow along, even those seated at the back, ensuring everyone stays connected to the lesson. Additionally, interactive elements like quiz apps provide immediate feedback and make lessons more dynamic. Overall, integrating technology creates a more engaging and inclusive learning environment despite the challenges of overcrowding.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Flexible Instructional Approaches**

The findings showed that teachers demonstrated a commendable level of instructional adaptability, effectively modifying their approaches to address the challenges posed by overcrowded classrooms. This adaptability is reflected in their flexible strategies, such as segmenting lessons into smaller, more manageable components to sustain student engagement, employing diverse delivery methods including storytelling and visual aids, and utilizing questioning techniques to facilitate ongoing formative assessment. Such flexibility aligns with the principles of differentiated instruction and is grounded in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, wherein scaffolding is essential. For example, the strategy employed by FT-1, which involves students presenting topics to their peers before receiving teacher feedback, exemplifies a blended approach that integrates both scaffolding and peer tutoring, thereby enhancing comprehension through repeated exposure and contextual reinforcement. Furthermore, MT-2 mobility within the classroom illustrates the concept of proximity teaching, ensuring that all students remain actively engaged by maximizing visual and auditory accessibility.

### **Cooperative Learning Techniques**

Cooperative learning has emerged as a pivotal pedagogical strategy in response to overcrowded classrooms, allowing teachers to arrange students into structured groups that foster collaboration, peer support, and shared accountability. By assigning specific roles such as discussion leader, recorder, and presenter, educators ensure active participation from all students, including those typically quieter,

promoting equity in engagement. This method aligns with social interdependence theory,<sup>27</sup> which posits that cooperative structures enhance motivation and performance when learners work toward common goals. Evidence suggests collaborative learning alleviates teachers' workloads and cultivates learner autonomy, a crucial aspect of self-directed learning and engagement. Furthermore, as highlighted by reports from MT-3 and FT-3, this approach facilitates community building within the classroom, an essential component for fostering students' emotional safety and encouraging academic risk-taking. The findings also suggest that cooperative learning enabled learners to work together and supported a collaborative classroom culture, helping to bridge the gaps created by overcrowding.

### **Use of Technology and Multimedia Resources**

Technology and multimedia resources also significantly enhance engagement; teachers prefer to play videos and interactive apps directly in class to encourage real-time discussions and collaborative learning experiences. Moloi et.al. indicated that using projected presentations, such as slides with key points and images, helps keep all learners engaged with the material, particularly those seated at the back.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, learner-centred strategies focus on measuring understanding through targeted questioning, enabling teachers to identify and address specific areas where learners need support, particularly in complex subjects like economics.<sup>29</sup> Technology and multimedia resources were also valuable for enhancing lesson engagement and accessibility. Videos, slideshows, and interactive apps allowed learners to connect with material more effectively, making learning more inclusive despite overcrowded conditions. Overall, the findings emphasise that combining these approaches can significantly promote engagement and understanding in overcrowded classrooms, creating a more interactive and supportive educational environment.

### **Discussion Summary**

The findings of this study indicate that educators successfully implemented a range of flexible instructional strategies, collaborative learning techniques, and technology-enhanced methods to address the challenges presented by overcrowded classrooms. Evidence of instructional adaptability was demonstrated through practices such as segmenting lessons into manageable portions, utilizing visual aids, and applying questioning techniques consistent with Vygotsky's scaffolding theory to accommodate diverse learners. Incorporating cooperative learning facilitated peer collaboration and equitable participation through role-based group activities, corresponding with social interdependence theory to enhance student motivation and engagement. Furthermore, the deliberate use of multimedia resources, including videos, slides, and interactive applications, contributed to creating inclusive and learner-centered environments, particularly benefiting students positioned further from instructional focal points. Collectively, these methodologies fostered an interactive, supportive, and adaptive learning environment that effectively alleviated the limitations inherent in overcrowded educational settings.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to improve teaching and learning in overcrowded classrooms. Firstly, continuous professional development should be promoted to equip teachers with flexible instructional strategies, cooperative learning techniques, and skills for integrating technology effectively into their teaching. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt peer teaching and scaffolding approaches, where learners present content to their peers before receiving teacher feedback, as this fosters collaboration and reinforces understanding. Enhancing classroom mobility through proximity teaching is also vital, as it helps maintain student engagement and improves access to instruction across the classroom. Schools should institutionalize cooperative learning structures by incorporating role-based group tasks that promote inclusive participation and learner autonomy.

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<sup>27</sup> Johnson & Johnson, "Annual Report 2005," 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Q.M. Moloi, A. Kanjee, and N. Roberts, "Using Standard Setting to Promote Meaningful Use of Mathematics Assessment Data within Initial Teacher Education Programmes," *Pythagoras* 40, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>29</sup> Zimu-Biyela, "Using the School Environmental Education Programme (SEEP) to Decolonise the Curriculum: Lessons from Ufasimba Primary School in South Africa."

Moreover, access to technology and multimedia tools should be expanded, ensuring all learners benefit from visual and interactive resources that support comprehension, particularly in complex subjects. Differentiated instruction must be supported to meet the diverse needs of learners, with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development offering a practical theoretical guide. In addition, teachers should be encouraged to share resources, lesson plans, and multimedia tools to reduce workload and maintain instructional quality. Lastly, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to assess the effectiveness of these strategies, using learner feedback and performance data to inform ongoing improvements.

## CONCLUSION

The study underscores that, despite the persistent challenge of overcrowded classrooms, teachers have exhibited remarkable adaptability by implementing flexible instructional strategies, cooperative learning techniques, and technology-enhanced teaching methods. These approaches fostered student engagement and aligned with established educational theories such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and social interdependence theory. The findings emphasize the importance of dynamic, inclusive, and learner-centered teaching practices in mitigating the adverse effects of overcrowding. Ultimately, these strategies contribute to creating more supportive and interactive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students.

## Limitations of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights into effective teaching practices in overcrowded classrooms, it is limited in scope by its reliance on qualitative data from a small sample of teachers within specific educational contexts. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to all schools or regions. Additionally, the study primarily reflects the perspectives of educators and does not include direct input from learners, which could have enriched the understanding of classroom engagement and effectiveness. Future research should consider broader, mixed-method approaches and include student voices to better understand the challenges and successes associated with overcrowded learning environments.

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Mr. Motsi Qoyi is a passionate and experienced lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Walter Sisulu University. He holds a Bachelor of Education (BEd) specializing in Economics and Business Studies, a BEd Honours in Educational Management and Policy, and a Master of Education. With over 4 years of experience in higher education, Mr. Qoyi is committed to training and mentoring future educators to meet the diverse needs of South African classrooms. His teaching philosophy emphasizes learner-centered approaches and the integration of technology into teaching and learning. Mr. Qoyi's research

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