E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)
ISSN – Online 2720-7722 | Print 2821-8949
Volume 7 Issue 9 2026 pp 2785 - 2803
Available online at: https://noyam.org/journals/ehass/
DOI: https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20267922

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Opportunities and challenges in implementing CAPS and Progression Policy in Chris Hani District Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the challenges and opportunities of implementing the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and the Progression Policy in secondary schools in Chris Hani District, Eastern Cape Province. The paper aimed to identify the barriers to effective CAPS implementation while highlighting the potential benefits of the Progression Policy. A qualitative research methodology was employed, utilizing a case study design. Key findings reveal that the Department of Basic Education often implements curriculum changes without adequately consulting teachers, leading to challenges in execution. In addition to the findings, although the implementation of CAPS and Progression Policy is famous for its challenges, there seem to be some opportunities, such as that teachers and learners found CAPS content user-friendly and that the progressed learners are likely to develop self-esteem as they are in the next Grade even if they have not performed well. The study concludes that the Progression Policy, while well-intentioned, negatively impacts the quality of teaching and learning. Not everything about CAPS and the Progression Policy is a challenge; there are also opportunities that the Department of Education can build on to address the challenges. The paper recommends collaboration between the Department of Basic Education, parents, and principals to address these challenges and enhance both CAPS and the Progression Policy in secondary schools. Opportunities in CAPS can be used as a stepping stone when addressing the challenges of CAPS and the Progression Policy.

Keywords: Progression, Curriculum Changes, Collaboration, Implementation, Opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Some countries have embarked on curriculum dispensation, intending to enhance the quality of education, as supported by Pham et al.[1] The high level of anxiety among teachers in introducing a new curriculum indicates the demand for the correct curriculum dissemination and sufficient training.[2]

According to Sung and Choi, curriculum dissemination plays a pivotal role in how the new curriculum is viewed and accepted by teachers, which unfortunately has not been the case with the Chris

[1] K.T. Pham et al., " Curriculum Reformation in Vetnam: Primary Teachers' Views, Experiences, and Challenges.," *Education* 51, no. 3 (2023): 440–51.

[2] S. Dikgale and T.A Chauke, "Teacher's Perceptions on the Impact of Curriculum Changes on Accounting Learners' Academic Performance.," *Indonesian Journal of Social Research* 6, no. 3 (2024): 220–35.

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PUBLICATION HISTORY - Received: 15th January, 2026 | Accepted: 16th July, 2026 | Published: 29th October, 2026.
TO CITE THIS ARTICLE – Mafilika, Zamikhaya, and Newlin Marongwe. "Opportunities and challenges in implementing CAPS and Progression Policy in Chris Hani District Secondary Schools." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 7, no.9 (2026): 2785 – 2803. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20267922
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Hani West teachers.[3] Rakolobe believe that it is unfortunate that teachers are only seen as curriculum executors who are being sidelined by policymakers and educational frontrunners during curriculum design, which negatively impacts the implementation of the new curriculum.[4] For these reasons, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) has received criticism from educators, which could have been avoided had they (teachers) been involved during curriculum design.

CAPS is the latest policy introduced in South Africa to replace the previous curricula to improve education in South African schools. Although CAPS seems to be a promising curriculum with some aspects derived from the previous curricula, such as a learner-centred approach and assessment methods, there seem to be gaps, such as a Progression policy, a lack of resources, and overcrowded classrooms that still require attention. According to Siregar and Aziza, the lack of resources, such as laboratory facilities in schools, becomes a demotivating factor for teaching and learning for both teachers and learners.[5] Graham believes that the difficulties with smooth teaching and learning, which negatively affect the learners' performance, stem from overcrowded classrooms.[6] One of the policies under CAPS was the Progression Policy. The Department of Basic Education, particularly in the Eastern Cape Province, has experienced poor results, particularly in Grade 12. According to the report by SABC News, the Department of Basic Education has been blamed for the poor results of the Eastern Cape school named Langkloof Secondary School, which obtained 6.4% in the 2024 academic year. Teachers and parents of the school attributed poor results to the lack of resources and teachers. According to parents, Grade 12 learners went to the examination rooms unprepared.[7]

Poor results of Grade 12 have been a thorn in the flesh for secondary school principals as accounting officers of the institutions since they owe the Department of Basic Education an explanation as to why their schools have not performed to the set targets. According to the teachers and principals, learners from the Intersen phase, especially those from rural schools, are struggling in English. This is believed to result from the lack of resources such as libraries and personal reading material. This view is supported by Krashen, who contends that reading material plays a prominent role in enhancing reading, writing, and understanding of the content, which is highly demanded in South African schools as English is the language of Learning and Teaching.[8] According to Asri et al., there is a likelihood of difficulty in reading for learners whose academic background did not afford them a chance to develop reading ability at an early stage.[9] According to Makofane et al., learners from the Intermediate Phase are an academic burden to secondary schools.[10] Secondary school teachers are complaining of running behind schedule due to the standard of learners received from the intermediate phase. As a panacea, the DBE introduced the Progression Policy, which seeks to progress the learners to the next grade based on age cohort and the number of years in the phase. According to Driessen, when learners are not performing up to the level of their peers and do not meet the requirements of their level, they are to be given an extra year in the same class to improve their performance.[11] Progression Policy stipulates that the learner must at least fail once in the phase. This means that a learner who failed at Grade 10 in their first year will surpass the required age and, therefore, ought to progress to Grade 11 and 12 regardless of the performance. This has been showing negative results in the performance of the progressed Grade

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[3] Jung Hee Sung and J E Choi, "The Challenging and Transformative Implications of Education for Sustainable Development: A Case Study in South Korea," *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research* 4, no. 2 (2022): 1–14.

[4] K. A. Rakolobe, "Contextual Factors Obstructing the Effective Implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy in the Lesotho Education Sector," 2024.

[5] Shafa Azahra Siregar and Mirwan Surya Perdhana, "Literature Review on Organizational Performance and Sustainability of Educational NGOs for Obtaining Funding," *Diponegoro Journal of Management* 13, no. 2 (2024).

[6] Marien Alet Graham, "Overcrowded Classrooms and Their Association with South African Learners' Mathematics Achievement," *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education* 27, no. 2 (2023): 169–79.

[7] SABC News, "Education Department Blamed for 6.4% Matric Pass Rate at EC School" (SABC News, 2025).

[8] Kyung Sook Cho and Stephen Krashen, "Access to Books and English Reading: A Virtuous Circle," *English Language Teaching and Research Journal (ELTAR-J)* 1, no. 1 (2019): 43–48.

[9] Dahlia Novarianing Asri, Bambang Eko Hari Cahyono, and Rischa Pramudia Trisnani, "Early Reading Learning for Special Needs Students: Challenges on Inclusive Primary School during COVID-19 Pandemic," *Linguistics and Culture Review* 5, no. S1 (September 27, 2021): 1062–74, https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v5nS1.1489.

[10] Inneth B Makofane et al., "Factors Contributing to the Underperformance of Grades 8 and 9 Secondary School Learners in South Africa: A Scoping Review," *Sage Open* 15, no. 4 (2025): 21582440251375590.

[11] Emily P. Driessen et al., "Demystifying the Meaning of Active Learning in Postsecondary Biology Education," *CBE—Life Sciences Education* 19, no. 4 (December 2020): ar52, https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.20-04-0068.

12 learners. One of the shortfalls of the Progression Policy is that it does not apply in Grade 12. Kumanda, Abondiga and Mafumo believe that grade retention will likely encourage behavioral problems and can reduce learners' self-esteem as they are overage.[12]

Although learner retention is likely not to be applauded by learners, the DBE seems to have a valid reason for that. Repeating learners are likely to learn from their previous mistakes, and failing the class makes them grow fonder. Learners view Grade retention as demoralising, as some of them drop out of school because they do not accept failure. According to Hlasa, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) keeps the learners in the same grade to encourage them to attend classes; however, this seems to be playing a negative role in the interests of teachers in their jobs. Hoferichter and Fock indicate that one of the reasons for educators' stress is when they are compelled to implement policies they are not satisfied with, such as the Progression policy.[13] This is because teachers must deal with learners who are not coping with the set standards of the policy. At the same time, teachers are expected to do miracles by elevating the learners' academic performance. Based on this background, the study aims to:

1. To find out the challenges experienced by teachers in implementing CAPS in the Chris Hani West District
2. To establish learners' and teachers' opportunities for the Progression Policy in the Chris Hani West District.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper examines the encounters that hamper the smooth teaching and learning under CAPS and the concerns of teachers and learners about the implementation of CAPS and its policies, such as the Progression Policy in Secondary Schools. Understanding whether the challenges and opportunities of implementing CAPS and the Progression Policy are valid or not will serve as the primary focus when interpreting the literature.

Opportunities for CAPS implementation

CAPS has depicted several flaws in aspects such as the Progression Policy, overcrowded classrooms, and the lack of resources; however, there also seem to be some opportunities concerning the implementation of the Progression Policy. The CAPS is one of the curriculum policies implemented in post-apartheid South Africa.[14] Teachers are curriculum implementers in the classroom while the learners learn.[15] Curriculum implementers, like educators, applaud CAPS for its vivid content framework and assessment tasks, as teachers struggle less with interpreting the content and administering assessment tasks. According to the Department of Basic Education, CAPS has made learning and teaching user-friendly since it has a distinct and succinct policy.[16] This is believed to create a straightforward interpretation of tasks. The specific learning outcomes are delineated, making the implementation easy and ensuring that students get quality education. The Department of Basic Education goes further, stating that the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement introduced a variety of subjects that the students believe-will prepare them for their career fields in their post-matric.[17]

Condoned learners get motivated and are reluctant to drop out of classes, as supported by Erasmus et al.[18] Progression policy can potentially address high levels of learners with low self-esteem and eliminate dropout rates in schools. Learners who repeat classes are more likely to develop a negative

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[12] Nomaroma Kumanda, Jane-Francis Afungmeyu Abongdia, and T N Mafumo, "Learners' Retention: A Case of Two Primary Schools in East London," *Gender and Behaviour* 15, no. 2 (2017): 8769–76.

[13] F. Hoferichter, "How Teachers and Classmate Support Relate to Students' Stress and Achievement.," 2022, https://www.researchgate.net.

[14] K. Bertram, "Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)," 2019.

[15] Lokanath Mishra, Tushar Gupta, and Abha Shree, "Online Teaching-Learning in Higher Education during Lockdown Period of COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 1 (2020): 100012, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100012.

[16] Department of Basic Education, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* (Pretoria, South Africa: Department of Basic Education, 2019).

[17] Department of Basic Education, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS):National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12.*

[18] Gene Erasmus and Jean V Fourie, "The National Progression Policy in Gauteng Schools: Is the Policy Failing Progressed Learners?," *African Journal of Teacher Education and Development* 3, no. 1 (2024): 10.

attitude towards studies, become demotivated and eventually become a bad influence. This is supported by Saaidin, who believes that motivation is pivotal in enhancing learners' academic performance.[19] According to Ojo and Refentse, CAPS did not deviate from some of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) principles, such as keeping the learner-centred approach, where learners are not considered empty vessels to impart knowledge and are given a chance to play an active role in the class.[20] They continue to indicate that this enables learners to express their views since they can use their dialects in their groups. CAPS also seems to prepare learners for tertiary education since they are exposed to different forms of assessments, such as projects, assignments, and research, and learners, instead of teachers, do more work. Ojo and Refentse assert that CAPS succeeded in simplifying the textbook information to accommodate slow learners.[21] Through CAPS, the possibility of teamwork and the development of various skills, such as leadership, is given a chance.

Challenges of the implementation of CAPS

Lack of resources

Successful teaching and learning is determined by the availability of resources, as supported by Chuene and Florah, who assert that teachers are not in a position to effectively implement the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) under inadequate resources.[22] According to the experiences of teachers and learners of Cris Hani District, the lack of resources contributes a lot to the poor performance of Grade 12 learners.

Lack of resources, such as textbooks, negatively impacts teaching and learning and leads to poor performance of learners. Mpungose notes that CAPS compels teachers to rely on textbooks, which lessens teachers' morale due to not knowing the material development.[23] CAPS is viewed as favouring only the resourced schools since it has put an obligation on learners and parents to use resources crucial for successful curriculum implementation, which are not available in the majority of secondary schools in the Eastern Cape. Rural public schools are often subjected to hindrances to quality education, such as a lack of resources.[24] The DBE seems not to have considered the differences between public and private schools in terms of resource availability, which hinders learners' performance in public schools. There seem to be characteristics of social inequalities in the South African education system.[25] CAPS policy focuses mainly on assessment. The quality of the School-Based Tasks (SBAs) depends on the availability of resources. The challenges of resource shortage in rural secondary schools seemingly need a complex solution.[26]

The SBA tasks, which form 25% of the assessment, require learners and parents to use the internet and science resources, making it difficult for most rural school learners. Most learners in South Africa, particularly in the Eastern Cape Province, are from disadvantaged rural backgrounds, making it a mammoth task for them to keep up with the digital world, as supported by Czerniewicz et al.[27] For this reason, such schools cannot be expected to produce the best results under those conditions. Teachers find themselves inefficient in terms of content knowledge, a crucial attribute that must be conveyed to

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[19] N Saaidin, "The Influence between Metacognition Practice, Students' Learning Commitment and Academic Achievement of Matriculation Students in Physics," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 10, no. 3 (2020).

[20] Tinuade Adekunbi Ojo and Refentse Mathabathe, "An Investigation into the Effectiveness of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in South African Schools," *International Journal on Integrating Technology in Education* 10, no. 2 (June 30, 2021): 23–38, https://doi.org/10.5121/ijite.2021.10203.

[21] Adekunbi Ojo and Mathabathe, "An Investigation into the Effectiveness of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in South African Schools."

[22] Dayce Makakole Chuene and Florah Moleko Teane, "Resource Inadequacy as a Barrier to Effective Curriculum Implementation by Life Sciences Teachers in South Africa," *South African Journal of Education* 44, no. 2 (2024).

[23] Cedric Bheki Mpungose, "Beyond Limits: Lecturers' Reflections on Moodle Uptake in South African Universities," *Education and Information Technologies* 25, no. 6 (November 15, 2020): 5033–52, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10190-8.

[24] Pierre du Plessis and Raj Mestry, "Teachers for Rural Schools – a Challenge for South Africa," *South African Journal of Education* 39, no. Supplement 1 (September 30, 2019): S1–9, https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39ns1a1774.

[25] Bekithemba Dube, "Rural Online Learning in the Context of COVID 19 in South Africa: Evoking an Inclusive Education Approach," *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research* 10, no. 2 (June 15, 2020): 135, https://doi.org/10.17583/remie.2020.5607.

[26] S Govender, " Responding to Inequality in an Online Course in South Africa.," 2023, https://edtechbooks.org.

[27] Laura Czerniewicz et al., "A Wake-Up Call: Equity, Inequality and Covid-19 Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning," *Postdigital Science and Education* 2, no. 3 (October 23, 2020): 946–67, https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00187-4.

learners. Thaba-Nkadimene (2020) suggests that having enough school resources will likely increase teachers' productivity and improve the quality of education.

Overcrowded classes

The teacher-learner ratio in public schools has not been addressed, and it contributes to poor secondary school results.[28] In overcrowded classrooms, there is a likelihood of less individual attention, and this can jeopardize the authenticity of results, as supported by Chimbi and Jita.[29] Mankgele believe that sometimes teachers feel the need to adapt their teaching methods to fit individual needs.[30] According to Franklin and Harrington, classroom management can be hindered in overcrowded classes and contribute to poor results.[31] Feedback plays a crucial role in assessment; after each evaluation, the good teacher may feel indebted to give feedback to learners; however, this becomes difficult in noisy classes. This is supported by West and Meier.[32]

Progression Policy

The regulations of the National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12, announced on 28 December 2012, imply that learners are allowed to fail only once in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase to ensure that they (learners) do not spend more than four years in the phase. This negatively affects learners' performance since the policy applies to all grades except Grade 12. This policy stipulates that learners should be promoted based on age cohort and the number of years in the phase. Learners who are promoted under these conditions are likely to perform poorly in Grade 12. Not only are schools negatively affected by the failure of the progressed learners, but districts and provinces are also indirectly affected by the poor results of each school. Driessen defines Grade retention as retaining students in the class. For an extra school year due to their inability to meet the standards.[33] According to Goos, Grade repeaters are the beneficiaries of Grade retention since rigorous remedial work is likely.[34] Figlio and Ozek believe that English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) can be improved through Grade retention since learners are granted a second chance at their prescribed work.[35] Even though the antagonists of Grade retention are the notion that it can bring stigma to the repeaters and lower their self-esteem, Goos et al. encapsulate a view that Grade retention positively affects the learners' psychological functioning, especially if one can compare the repeaters and the ones who have an advantage to those who did the class once.[36] Teachers in secondary schools in South Africa are complaining about the Progression Policy. They indicate that it gives Grade 12 learners far lower grades in terms of academic levels. This negatively impacts school performance and teachers who are overloaded with low-performing learners. Most progressed learners struggle to pass Grade 12, and even those who manage to pass achieve poor results. During Grade 12 results analysis at the beginning of each academic year, quantity versus quality becomes a grim concern. Nkuna and Heystek indicate that class repetition has the potential to lessen the learners' interest in learning and eventually cause them to

[28] Graham, "Overcrowded Classrooms and Their Association with South African Learners' Mathematics Achievement."
[29] Godsend T Chimbi and Loyiso C Jita, "Resurgence of Large Class Sizes and Pedagogical Reform in 21st Century Secondary School History Classrooms.," *Research in Social Sciences and Technology* 6, no. 3 (2021): 45–63.
[30] Khutso Pitso Mankgele, "The Consequence Of Overcrowded Classrooms In The Teachıng And Learnıng Of Entrepreneurıal Subjects In Secondary Schools" 3 (November 1, 2023): 1533–45.
[31] Hayley Franklin and Ingrid Harrington, "A Review into Effective Classroom Management and Strategies for Student Engagement: Teacher and Student Roles in Today's Classrooms," *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 7, no. 12 (September 16, 2019): 1, https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v7i12.4491.
[32] Joyce West and Corinne Meier, "Overcrowded Classrooms – The Achilles Heel of South African Education?," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 10, no. 1 (April 30, 2020), https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v10i1.617.
[33] Driessen et al., "Demystifying the Meaning of Active Learning in Postsecondary Biology Education."
[34] Mieke Goos, Joana Pipa, and Francisco Peixoto, "Effectiveness of Grade Retention: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Educational Research Review* 34 (November 2021): 100401, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100401.
[35] David Figlio and Umut Özek, "An Extra Year to Learn English? Early Grade Retention and the Human Capital Development of English Learners," *Journal of Public Economics* 186 (June 2020): 104184, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2020.104184.
[36] Goos, Pipa, and Peixoto, "Effectiveness of Grade Retention: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis."

drop out of school.[37] Learner retention tends to demoralize learners, and they become lazy in class activities, which also affects their classmates since demotivation leads to demotivation.[38]

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is structured under cognitive constructivism theory. According to Chand, the psychological theory of constructivism originates from the rapidly expanding field of cognitive science, primarily from the constructivist perspectives of Jean Piaget, the socio-historical work of Lev Vygotsky, and the constructivist account of discovery learning by Jerome Bruner.[39] According to Hai-Ninh et al., environmental change can change in a person's perception.[40] The investigation of the study intends to change the teaching and learning conditions to be conducive, which will automatically change the perceptions of teachers, principals, HoDs, and learners towards the implementation of CAPS in secondary schools in the Chris Hani West District. The theory supports the idea that both teachers and learners actively engage with the CAPS and Progression Policy, adapting their behaviours and strategies based on these educational frameworks. This aligns with exploring how these policies affect teaching and learning processes. The researchers in this current study explored the experiences of teachers and learners who tapped into the cognitive constructivist perception that understanding is constructed from personal experiences. This provides insights into how these individuals make sense of and navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the policies.

The theory's emphasis on change in environment and behaviour, as discussed above, aligns with the study's goal to identify barriers and opportunities, suggesting how teachers might adapt their approaches to effectively implement CAPS and the Progression Policy. According to Daodu et al., constructivists suggest that learning is more effective when a student is actively engaged in the learning process rather than attempting to receive knowledge passively.[41] The participants in this research are teachers, principals, HoDs, and learners. Based on this, the researchers found it imperative to adhere to the principles of constructivist learning theory since the participants played an active role in the research to obtain authentic results. The theory was used to interpret and discuss the findings of the study because the interpretivism paradigm aligns with cognitive constructivism, which values the subjective experiences of participants, allowing for diverse interpretations of how the policies impact education.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted the qualitative method and interpretivism paradigm, as supported by Berryman, who asserts that for interpretative researchers to find answers to qualitative questions, they need to structure their research.[42] The researchers in this study used purposive sampling to select five secondary school principals, five HoDs, ten teachers, and five learners from five different secondary schools.

Data were generated through in-depth, face-to-face individual interviews. The purpose of the study required the researchers to use a case study to obtain an in-depth comprehension of the challenges and opportunities of the Progression Policy under CAPS in secondary schools of Chris Hani West District. The researchers also used the document analysis method to generate data. They analyzed CAPS documents, policies related to teaching and learning, such as Promotion and Progression policies, the South African Schools Act, and other related documents.

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[37] Ellen Sesi Nkuna and Jan Heystek, "Learner Progression Policy Implementation Challenges and Possible Strategies for Improvement," *South African Journal of Educational Leadership and Management* 3, no. 2 (2024): 99–125.

[38] Maureen Hadebe and Moeniera Moosa, "' I Thought I Was Going to Pass': Learners' Experiences of Grade Retention," *South African Journal of Education* 42, no. 3 (2022): 1–10.

[39] Satish Prakash Chand, "Constructivism in Education: Exploring the Contributions of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner," *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* 12, no. 7 (July 5, 2023): 274–78, https://doi.org/10.21275/SR23630021800.

[40] Hai-Ninh Do, Bich Ngoc Do, and Minh Hue Nguyen, "How Do Constructivism Learning Environments Generate Better Motivation and Learning Strategies? The Design Science Approach," *Heliyon* 9, no. 12 (2023).

[41] M. Daodu, C Elegbede, and O Adedotun, "Effectiveness of Constructivism Theory of Learning as 21st Century Method of Teaching," *Journal of Advanced Psychology* 6, no. 2 (September 29, 2024): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.47941/japsy.2267.

[42] Donna R Berryman, "Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology, and Methods: Information for Librarian Researchers," *Medical Reference Services Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (2019): 271–79.

Ethical considerations

All ethical measures and principles were taken into consideration as the guidelines for data collection. All participants signed a consent form. Voluntary participation, ethical principles of informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity were at the centre of the study. During the interviews, the participants were free to voice their experiences since pseudonyms were used instead of their real names to ensure anonymity.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Data were generated through semi-structured individual interviews in five secondary schools, 30 minutes each, with five participants in each school, heterogeneously. Documents and policies such as the CAPS document, the South African Schools Act, the Progression Policy, and the Promotion Policy were analyzed as part of data collection. Themes such as opportunities of CAPS for teachers, opportunities of CAPS for learners, the impact of insufficient resources in secondary schools, and the impact of overcrowded classrooms were used to structure the presentation of data. To ascertain the anonymity of participants, the researchers used pseudonyms. Questions from the researchers were presented as 'R'. All the interviewees were introduced to the following questions:

- Concerning the workload, what contribution would you say CAPS has made?
- What positive changes do you think CAPS has introduced in your curriculum?
- What are the opportunities of the Progression Policy in secondary schools?
- To what extent do you think the insufficient resources affected the performance of learners?
- How does overcrowding affect teaching and learning in your school?

Schools were presented as School 'A to E'. To alleviate bias, the researchers used participants' inclusion of word-for-word quotes. This assisted the researchers in obtaining accurate responses from participants.

Data from Teachers

Opportunities of CAPS and Progression Policy for teachers

Regarding the opportunities that CAPS offered, teachers showed only a few of them versus the challenges, citing the lowered workload, although learners did not echo the same sentiments concerning this aspect. Teachers applauded the simplified information, which makes it easy to interpret for both learners and teachers. Teachers believe that the learner-centred approach, which is derived from Outcome-Based Education (OBE), is one of the strong points of CAPS since it gives learners a free flow to express their opinions and to showcase their abilities in the class, as reflected by the verbatim quotes below. According to teachers, this makes teaching interesting.

Ludwe: "*As a language teacher, I find the load lowered, with a lot of work being given to learners rather than being given to us, even though learners are complaining, but they are the ones who are supposed to be working more than we are".*

Elinna: "*The textbook information has been simplified, and that makes it easier even for slow learners to comprehend. The content is clear, and most teachers find less struggle with interpretation. The teaching approach is still learner-centred, which improves learners' abilities since some learners do not feel free to express themselves in the class; they are now granted opportunities to make use of the language they understand. This develops their self-esteem".*

Themba: "I salute the English examiners for incorporating an educative summary as part of paper 1 in each examination. It covers an area that is not covered in all other subjects. One who does not teach language can ask where it fits in language".

Celiwe*: "A learner-centred approach work well with my Life Science class as it gives them enough chance to deal easily with chapters such as Human Evolution, and data handling, which seem to be difficult when being done individually"*

Thelma: "History demands a lot of practice and collaboration, especially essay questions. Slow learners seemed to grasp a lot of knowledge from others since I gave them a chance to air out their opinions

pertaining to the content in their groups. For the past five years, I have never obtained less than an 80% pass rate, even though this is below the district's target."

Opportunities for Progression Policy for learners

Teachers seemed to understand the frustration that learners go through when their results oblige them to repeat a Grade, since they alluded to the fact that the Progression Policy enhances learners' self-esteem, even though there are hidden repercussions. Teachers also emphasized that there is a quality of assessment across different academic and socio-economic backgrounds of learners, despite the challenges in rural schools.

R: "What do you think are the opportunities of the Progression Policy?"

Tsidiso: "On the side of learners, I can say it does improve their self-esteem since learners tend to compare themselves with their peers, which makes it difficult to accept failure. Learners do not understand the repercussions of being condemned, as long as they see themselves in the next Grade with the achievers".

Maliso: "The majority of SBA tasks are set as common tasks to ascertain that the quality of assessment offered is equal regardless of socio-economic and academic backgrounds of learners". Tasks are straightforward, which makes it easy for learners to interpret. The fact that the SBA tasks introduce learners to tasks like assignments, research projects, and presentations means they (SBA)are preparing our learners for tertiary education, as it requires self-driven people."

Data from Learners

There were elements of commonality between teachers' and learners' responses concerning the opportunities of CAPS and Progression Policy in areas such as the development of self-esteem from learners, and easy accumulation of year marks through SBA tasks like projects and assignments.

R: "Although progression policy is known for more challenges than opportunities, as a learner, what can you say are the advantages of progression policy?"

Bonani: *"First of all, as learners, we are aware that you fail once in a phase, and you will be promoted to the next Grade whether you have passed or failed."*

Esethu: *"Every learner feels good to see themselves in the next Grade, so at least you are granted a chance to work harder and achieve if you are a serious person."*

Elona: *"It is easy to accumulate a good year-mark through assignments, research, and all the take-home tasks if you have someone who is academically above you, especially in science subjects."*

Challenges in the Implementation of CAPS and Progression Policy

Participants were allowed to express their experiences concerning challenges posed by CAPS and Progression Policy. There seem to be more challenges compared to opportunities of CAPS and Progression Policy in various aspects, such as insufficient resources, overcrowded classes and the performance and attitudes of progressed learners. Data from all the categories of the research participants show the answers to the questions asked.

Data from Teachers

Teachers expressed their sad experience about the lack of resources, particularly the shortage of textbooks and digital devices such as televisions, which they believe can make teaching and learning more interesting. Science teachers expressed their frustration with working under conditions that are not conducive to science subjects, where there are no laboratory kits, let alone in the classrooms. Some teachers expressed despair about teaching in overcrowded classes, which negatively impacts the results of learners. About the Progression Policy, teachers have expressed their disappointment to the DBE for continuing with the policy while learners are aware of the policy. They (teachers) went on to state that the progressive learners are the ones who give discipline problems in classes, such as late submission of tasks or not submitting at all.

R: 'To what extent do you think insufficient resources affected the performance of learners?"

Sakhi: *"Imagine teaching a language, especially literature, without a television and with some learners sharing textbooks. This compels teachers to make copies of each chapter, which is time-consuming. Slow learners find it difficult to envisage the content."*
Nobom: "*I'm teaching science subjects where there is no science lab; as a result, the school is intending to phase out Life Sciences since it impacts negatively on the results of the school and the district".*
R: "How does overcrowding affect teaching and learning in your class?"
Noxi: "*Negatively, I can't move around my class, and sometimes I can feel that some learners need special attention. During informal assessments, some learners tend to copy from others and in this way, I can't be confident in the results of the tasks."*
Xoli*: "It is very difficult to maintain class management. In such an environment, you cannot expect the best results."*
R: "What challenges can one cite as brought by Progression policy?"
Nombeko*: "As long as learners are aware that they will be progressing based on age cohort and the number of years in the phase, we will always have learners who do not study. Progressed learners always have excuses when it comes to the submission of tasks. It is always a progressive learner who gives a discipline problem in the class."*
Mawaza: *"I always have a problem with the Department of Basic Education regarding how far this policy should be implemented because in Grade 12 learners are not progressing, giving schools a lot of accountability."*

Data from Learners

Concerning the shortage of textbooks, the fast learners seemed to face the challenge of sharing textbooks with slow learners, which is unfair to both sets of learners since it negatively affects the syllabus coverage. Concerning overcrowding in classrooms, in situations like this, naughty learners adopted a culture of copying from other learners in both formative and summative assessments, which compromises the authenticity of the assessment results. This results in teachers telling learners that they will ignore learners with unruly behavior and focus on those who show interest in learning.
R: "How do you think the shortage of resources affects you as a learner?"
Lwandle: *"It is not good to share textbooks; sometimes you are sharing with a person who is very slow during reading, and you must wait till your desk mate finishes; you will be left behind.*
Lwando*: "You feel embarrassed when a learner from another school, especially a private school, tells you how much they have covered in a syllabus, and you are several chapters behind because of the shortage of resources and science labs."*
R: "How does the issue of big numbers affect teaching and learning in your school?"
Liziwe: *"When we do our classwork and tests, other learners do not bother preparing since they know they will copy from others. Some learners, especially the repeaters, have a tendency to disturb us in the class."*
Anda: *"My class teacher tells us that they will only focus on the ones who show interest in studying".*
The researchers also used the document analysis method to generate data. They analyzed CAPS policies related to teaching and learning, such as the CAPS document, Promotion and Progression policies, and the South African Schools Act.

Data Gathered Through Document Analysis

CAPS document

Data has also been gathered through document analysis of different documents related to CAPS. To complement the data gathered through interviews, we also analysed certain documents such as CAPS, Progression Policy, Promotion Policy, and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. There was a striking resemblance between the data gathered through interviews and document analysis. CAPS is defined by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as a single, comprehensive, and user-friendly policy document introduced by the Department of Basic Education for all the subjects listed in the

National Curriculum Statement.[43] From the CAPS document, the researchers analyzed the opportunities of CAPS. The observation was in line with what teachers said during the interviews. CAPS acts as a syllabus guide, as it guides teachers on the content to be taught and when to finish it. It can also be applauded for simplifying the task of mentoring novice teachers since all the School-Based Assessment (SBA) tasks are explicitly outlined in the CAPS document, which makes it easy to navigate.

The researchers analyzed the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). They found it to be one of the most potent teaching tools, as it provides all the detailed work of a teacher in terms of the content to be covered. The content is shared in weeks of each term, and the SBA tasks are clearly outlined. In this way, a teacher who adheres to it can never go wrong with his subject. This has been a reason why teachers applauded it. What is established in this document aligns with what the teachers highlighted during the interviews. They also analyzed the Promotion Policy. It said that in secondary schools, learners must at least obtain 40% in four subjects and that one of the subjects must be at a Home Language level. The remaining three subjects must be passed with a minimum of 30%. This again confirmed the data the researchers obtained from the teachers and learners during the interviews. Furthermore, there was a huge element of commonality between our analysis and what the participants (teachers) revealed during the interviews regarding the Progression Policy. It stipulates that learners must be promoted to the next level based on the age cohort and the number of years in the phase. This evoked a lament from teachers, as it gives them a daunting task of trying to elevate their performance to that of other learners in the class.

The researchers also analyzed the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996, which stipulates that its intention is to ensure that all learners in schools get equal access to resources regardless of where they are and who they are. In the analyses, the researchers found why teachers complained about the policy (SASA), since their experience showed that the Department of Basic Education has not yet considered equality in schools. According to teachers, when comparing public schools, there is a huge difference between rural and urban schools. There is also a massive difference between public and private schools in terms of access to resources. Rural schools are the most disadvantaged schools with respect to resource access; on the other hand, private school learners are more privileged with respect to access to resources.

DISCUSSION

Both sets of participants exhibited commonalities in their responses to questions. Based on the responses of the participants, CAPS seems to have fewer opportunities than challenges. Data collected through document analysis showed that participants, particularly teachers, were happy with the stipulations of the CAPS document, with some unhappy with other documents, such as the Promotion Policy, Progression Policy, and the South African Schools Act.

Opportunities in the Implementation of CAPS and Progression Policy

Although teachers perceive CAPS as a policy dominated by challenges, there appear to be a few opportunities for its implementation in aspects such as the effectiveness of teaching methods, teacher workload, and the Progression Policy.

The study evidenced that CAPS significantly reduced workload, since the SBA tasks are set provincially and some at the district level. CAPS has not strayed from the learner-centred approach, which allows learners to play an active role in classes. This approach develops leadership, writing, and speaking skills since learners in groups play different roles such as group-leader, scribe, and presenter. This is supported by Matmuratova, who is of the view that a learner-centred approach allows learners to work harder since they are given leeway to express themselves.[44] According to van Diggele et al., a learner-centred approach enables learners to learn independently.[45] This implies that if policymakers

[43] Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classrooms English Grade R–12* (Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, 2012).
[44] N.A Matmuratova, "Five Characteristics of Learner Centred Teaching. ," 2020.
[45] Christie van Diggele et al., "Interprofessional Education: Tips for Design and Implementation," *BMC Medical Education* 20, no. Suppl 2 (2020): 455.

can consider incorporating inter-professional education in the approach, as suggested by van Diggele et al., it can assist learners in the professional world.[46]

It also emerged from the study that Progression policy seems to benefit learners since learners' self-esteem develops when they see themselves in the next Grade. According to Vreuls et al., curriculum development can be used as a tool to address the significant need for increased self-esteem of learners in school.[47] This gives curriculum developers and teachers the task of developing activities to improve self-esteem, as suggested by Branden.[48] Rizqiyah asserts that the vitality of children's self-confidence necessitates teachers and parents to work together to develop children's self-esteem since parents and learner guardians form the basis of education and learning.[49] Some learners use this opportunity as a chance to work harder and improve their performance. Both teachers and learners applaud CAPS for its clear content framework, with less difficulty with respect to the interpretation of SBA questions and instructions.

CAPS document

The study revealed that teachers showed satisfaction with the stipulations of the CAPS document, citing that the content to be taught and the duration to be completed are clearly outlined, which makes it even easier for novice teachers to use. This is supported by Letswane and du Plessis, who assert that the CAPS document has been made user-friendly since it clearly outlines the precise content to be taught, topics, and how the content should be assessed.[50] The CAPS makes it easy for teachers to assess learners using different methods such as assignments, tests, and presentations. Teachers were happy with how the Annual Teaching Plan correlates with the South African Schools Administration and Management Systems (SASAMS) derived from the Department of Basic Education, which suggests that the Annual Teaching Plan is drafted to address the learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic in line with the SASAMS.[51]

South African Schools Act

Teachers applauded the objective of the Act, which ensures that learners have equal access to education without discrimination. However, in contrast, teachers seem to have questions about the distribution of funds and resources to schools. Rural school teachers indicated that they wish they could share the same privileges that urban school teachers enjoy in terms of resources. They (rural school teachers) view teaching as the most frustrating career when the Department of Basic Education (DBE) compares their performance with that of resourced schools. Public school teachers complained about the teacher-learner ratio, which seemed not to be given attention by the DBE and negatively affects the academic performance of learners. Section 34 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 states that it is the responsibility of the state to provide equal funding to schools so that they (schools) can be able to function effectively to the expectations of the country. Section 37 of the South African Schools Act mandates the school governing bodies of public schools to establish and administer a school fund and manage the funds in accordance with the directions issued by the provincial Head of Department. This makes it clear that most governing bodies in Chris Hani West District schools are at risk of being perceived as inefficient in the management and administration of funds, since the funding provided to their schools is insufficient.

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[46] van Diggele et al., "Interprofessional Education: Tips for Design and Implementation."
[47] Joyce Vreuls et al., "Responsive Curriculum Development for Professional Education: Different Teams, Different Tales," *The Curriculum Journal* 33, no. 4 (2022): 636–59.
[48] Nathaniel Branden, *The Power of Self-Esteem*, (Health Communications, 1992).
[49] Fathor Rosi et al., "Smart Parenting in Building Children's Personality Through Religion-Based Habituation," *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 1 (2022): 731–40.
[50] Mantekana J. Letshwene and Elize C. du Plessis, "The Challenges of Implementing the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement in Accounting," *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. Supplement 2 (December 31, 2021): S1–10, https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v41ns2a1978.
[51] Department of Basic Education, "Annual Teaching Plans for 2023/2024," 2022.

Challenges

Progression Policy

Although there are opportunities with respect to the implementation of CAPS, it stemmed from the data collected through interviews and document analysis that the policy poses a lot of frustration for secondary school teachers and the School Management Team (SMT) since it seems not to be preparing learners for the future. The study revealed that the Progression Policy does not prepare the learners for tertiary education, since they (learners) reach tertiary education with a lot of content gaps. This is supported by Makhanya, who encapsulates the view that progressive learners are likely to face a challenge at the academic level where there is no progression policy.[52] Based on the findings of the study, the strain of this policy is felt at Grades 11and 12. The education system compels the teachers to progress learners to the next Grade based on the stipulation that says the learners are to be progressed based on the number of years in the phase and their age cohort. This was a lament of teachers in some schools in the Chris Hani West District.

Most of the progressed learners seem to be giving schools a hard time since teachers and school management have accountability on their shoulders regarding the performance of the schools, as indicated by school principals. Even though the progressed learners are no longer granted the Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) in Grade 12, it still seems strenuous to teachers and particularly the principals, who will have to account for the pass rate of the schools. Progressed learners need special attention based on their academic potential, and teachers complain about not having enough time for them, as new Grade 12 learners demand undivided attention. The findings of Mogale correlate with this, indicating that this compromises the quality of education offered by teachers, as they end up focusing on chapters that they believe will be part of the examinations.[53]

Many progressed learners do not complete Grade 12 as they are used to being the beneficiaries of the Progression Policy and are the ones who give problems about behaviour. This is in line with the findings of Khobe, who postulates that condoned learners are likely to come across academic challenges and behavioral problems.[54] Parents, on the other hand, are well vested in their children's benefits of the Progression Policy and are subsequently losing interest in providing the necessary academic support to their children, which, according to Adonis, is threatening the learners' academic performance.[55] In an endeavor to overcome these challenges, teachers in schools with adequate infrastructure can establish separate classes for condoned learners to provide them with special attention and avoid disturbance of the new learners in a Grade.

Overcrowded classrooms

It is established from the study that learners in schools with large numbers are not able to get the individual attention required by the principles of teaching due to overcrowded classrooms in secondary schools in the Chris Hani West District. Teachers indicated that they struggle to move around the class, and this makes it difficult to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their learners. This forces teachers to use an instructional method of teaching since group work is impossible in this kind of environment, which retards learners' academic performance. This is supported by Ibrahim, who suggests that overcrowded classrooms hamper teachers' ability to give learners individual attention.[56] Teachers in the Chris Hani West District found themselves working under these circumstances and felt obliged to use an instructional method when delivering their lessons, as indicated by the participants (teachers) in the study. This is because they do not have enough space to administer their planned approaches in classes. This is supported by Kholisah et al. This implies that the quality of teaching and learning and results are

[52] P.D. Makhanya, "Effect of the Implementation of the Progression Education Policy at Public Institutions. A Case Study of Pinetown District in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.," 2021.

[53] Makobo Lydia Mogale, "Pedagogical Implications on Curriculum Support for Learner Progression: Policy Promises and Outcomes," 2023.

[54] M. A Khobe, "The Role of School Progression Policy on Grade 12 Learners' Self-Esteem in Motheo Education District," 2021, https://scholar.ufs.ac.za.

[55] Delyth Zita Adonis, "Grade Nine Educators' Perspectives on and Experiences of the Progression and Promotion Policy at a School" (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2021).

[56] Musa Ibrahim, "Impact of Large Class Size on the Performance of English Language Students of Colleges of Education in Borno State, Nigeria," *Zaria Journal of Educational Studies (ZAJES)* 24, no. SPECIAL (2024): 101–9.

compromised.[57] For example, group work where learners would get a chance to lead in groups and make use of their dialects is infringed. In line with this, Miguel et al. in their findings revealed that learners learn better from each other, and this contributes positively to their academic performance.[58]

The study also revealed that sometimes the roles they (learners) can be given in groups could develop their potential; since teaching and learning in the Chris Hani West District is conducted in overcrowded classes, this is impossible. According to Tshangana et al., as mentioned by the teacher in school 'D', the amount of space that the learners and teachers share determines the academic attainment of students.[59] In support of this, Osai notes that learner participation can be reduced by the environment of overcrowded classes and increase stress levels in learners.[60] This, by implication, indicates that curriculum planners must take into account the teacher-learner ratio when drafting the curriculum. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) that involve students and parents can prioritize infrastructure issues in their school meetings as a panacea to maintain a balanced teacher-learner ratio. Teachers can make use of creative teaching methods, such as integrating technology using digital tools, such as online quizzes, to overcome overcrowded classes. Frequent teacher development can include new methods of teaching in overpopulated classrooms.

Lack of resources

The study found that the lack of resources in classes at Cris Hani West District makes both teachers and learners less interested in a lesson. Language and science teachers were compelled to devise some strategies to supplement the lack of resources in their classes, such as photocopying copies of chapters to avoid sharing textbooks and trying to make learners envisage the content, since they do not have televisions and science laboratories. According to teachers, this contributes to the fact that most learners do not have a clear picture of what the teacher is trying to share with them. In line with this, Chuene and Teane suggest that learners' interest in learning is determined by the availability of resources.[61] For example, in science subjects, learners need to visualize the aspects of the lesson. By implication, this means that the chances of improving learners' academic performance under the conditions in which the teachers render teaching and learning at Cris Hani District are slim. This is indicative of a need for the Department of Basic Education to prioritize investing in teaching and learning resources that include infrastructure to improve the academic performance of learners in the district. This is in line with Fernandez et al., who postulate that the performance of learners can easily be affected by the school infrastructure, as was the case in school 'B'.[62] With the lack of resources, learners ought to envisage the content, which hinders their performance.

The study reveals that rural schools still experience social inequalities in terms of the distribution of teaching and learning resources in schools. Many secondary schools at Cris Hani District are in rural areas and places them within the bracket of under-resourced schools. Uleanya correlates with this, indicating that many learners in South Africa, especially from rural schools, are negatively affected by social inequality.[63] According to Ajani, the provision of teaching and learning resources in South African secondary schools is tantamount to political and social injustice.[64] Rural schoolteachers in Cris

[57] Nur Kholisah et al., "Analysis Of The Impact Of Lack Of Classrooms On Students' Conductivity While Learning," *Progres Pendidikan* 5, no. 2 (May 27, 2024): 134–38, https://doi.org/10.29303/prospek.v5i2.408.

[58] Iván Miguel García-López, Elizabeth Acosta-Gonzaga, and Elena Fabiola Ruiz-Ledesma, "Investigating the Impact of Gamification on Student Motivation, Engagement, and Performance," *Education Sciences* 13, no. 8 (August 7, 2023): 813, https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13080813.

[59] Noluthabo Tshangana, Thanduxolo Nomtshongwana, and Andrea Mqondiso Buka, "Teaching Experiences with Overcrowded Classrooms in Primary Schools in the OR Tambo Coastal District of South Africa," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)* 4, no. 8 (2023): 936–46.

[60] J.A Osai, "Experiences with Overcrowded Classrooms in Basic Education in Ghana," 2021.

[61] Chuene and Teane, "Resource Inadequacy as a Barrier to Effective Curriculum Implementation by Life Sciences Teachers in South Africa."

[62] Xavier Fernández-i-Marín et al., "Policy Growth, Implementation Capacities, and the Effect on Policy Performance," *Governance* 37, no. 3 (July 10, 2024): 927–45, https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12816.

[63] Chinaza Uleanya, "Rural University Education for Sustainable Development in South Africa: A Review," *Africa Education Review* 19, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 160–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2023.2180398.

[64] O.A Ajani, "Decolonizing Teacher Education in Pursuit of Multilingual Teaching and Learning in South African Higher Education. ," 2022.

Hani West District complain of relying on improvisation, such as visiting internet cafes to obtain information for their learners, since there are no science laboratories in their schools. This is time-consuming and causes a delay in syllabus coverage. According to Min Liu et al., it is the duty of under-resourced rural school principals to ensure that their schools deliver the appropriate curriculum despite their lack of resources.[65]

In some schools, learners have to share textbooks, which disturbs teaching and learning. Uleanya posits that a highly productive management system can be ascribed to adequate teaching and learning resources, which was not the case with rural schools in the Chris Hani West District, teachers, and learners.[66] The findings of this study show that language teachers do not have television sets to visualize literature lessons, and this negatively affects the learners' performance. In some schools, teachers shared the pain of not having access to the library, which is a privilege in urban schools, making it difficult to have reference material for both teachers and learners. This is in line with the findings of the research by Sirega and Aziza, who assert that access to the necessary resources improves the ability of teachers to foster the best academic achievement of learners.[67] This, by implication, means that to overcome these challenges, teachers should use the available resources and be creative in making learners think about abstract content.

Teaching is a three-legged entity that involves teachers, learners, and parents. Issues that hinder learners' academic achievement directly affect parents. This implies that parents have an obligation to notify the Department of Basic Education whenever they encounter unsatisfactory issues that hamper their children's education. In line with this, Algani and Mammana assert that the involvement of parents in their children's education plays a vital role in their academic achievements.[68] To obtain reliable and rich data, the researchers used document analysis. The documents, such as the CAPS document, Promotion Policy, Progression Policy, Annual Teaching Plan (ATP), and the South African Schools Act, were analyzed.

Challenges with the implementation of the Progression Policy document

Grade 12 teachers, as opponents of this policy, expressed their frustrating experience regarding the Progression Policy, perceiving it as an additional burden since they have to go the extra mile trying to approximate progressed learners to other learners regarding their academic potential. This certainly has a negative impact on the academic performance of learners in secondary schools. According to Costa et al., the progression policy has the potential to decrease the quality of education.[69] The study revealed that not only are learners affected by this policy, but teachers are also directly affected negatively by the progression policy. In line with this, Kolobe and Mihai believe that teachers are opponents of the progression policy.[70] The Further Education and Training (FET) phase teachers complained of the crop of learners they receive from the Senior phase, citing that most of them seem to be far below the Grade 10 academic level, which contributes negatively to the Grade 11 and 12 results. Teachers are forced to see how they can approximate the progressed learners up to the level of other learners who have achieved the minimum requirements of Grade 12.[71] Teachers at the secondary level shared the same experience of ill-disciplined, progressing learners, as they are aware of the gains of the Progression Policy. According to Brahmbatt, proper teacher training on how to deal with issues related to progressed learners can play an essential role towards the improvement of progressed learners' academic performance.[72]

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[65] Shih-Min Liu, Yueh-Chun Huang, and Ru-Jer Wang, "Challenges and Professional Support for Principals at Rural Schools for Sustainable Development," *Sustainability* 16, no. 21 (2024): 9251.

[66] Uleanya, "Rural University Education for Sustainable Development in South Africa: A Review."

[67] N. Sirega and Aziza S., "Optimization of Facilities and Infrastructure Management in Improving the Quality of Learning," *Jurnal Tarbiyah* 28, no. 1 (2021): 30–43.

[68] Yousef Methkal Abd Algani, "Families' Involvement at Primary School and Its Impact on Their Children's Performance in Mathematics," *European Journal of Educational Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2023): 227–45.

[69] K Costa, "Navigating Post-Schooling Realities: Challenges and Opportunities for Progressed Learners in South Africa- A Multi-Method Research Protocol. ," 2024.

[70] L Kolobe and M Mihai, "Strategies to Support Progressed South African Grade 12 Mathematcs Learners.," 2023, https://doi.org.

[71] Fhulufhelo Patrick Muedi et al., "Strategies of Supporting Progressed Learners for Quality Teaching and Learning in Vhembe District, Limpopo, South Africa," *JETL (Journal of Education, Teaching and Learning)* 6, no. 2 (September 28, 2021): 138, https://doi.org/10.26737/jetl.v6i2.2430.

[72] Megha Brahmbhatt, "Support Provided to Progressed Learners in the Intermediate and Senior Phases," (University of Pretoria (South

According to Lumadi, for the School Management Teams (SMTs) to deal effectively with the issues of discipline of learners in schools, the DBE must first update the learner code of conduct.[73]

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the opportunities of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) to identify the challenges of the policy. Based on the central research objectives of this paper, the following recommendations are proposed to be taken into cognisance to address the challenges concerning the implementation of CAPS and the Progression Policy in Secondary Schools of Chris Hani West District:

- Teachers and learners perceive the Progression Policy as challenging, with fewer opportunities. The progression policy was introduced to remove learners from the system. Many progressed learners do not complete Grade 12. Therefore, this means that the policy must be reviewed by the Department of Basic Education.
- Promotion Policy sets low promotion standards, such as the minimum requirement, for a learner to progress to the next Grade, which seems not to prepare secondary school learners well for tertiary education. Policy makers must take tertiary promotion standards as a yardstick to measure the promotion standards in secondary schools, to prepare learners for tertiary education and contribute positively to economic growth.
- The lack of resources is one of the challenges that hinders the academic performance of learners. Private schools should be used as a reference in terms of the provision in public schools. The education department should identify schools that are overcrowded, supply or build more classes and employ more teachers.
- The South African Schools Act has promising stipulations such as the equality of learners' access to quality education without discrimination, which can produce better results when thoroughly monitored. This can be done by selecting a monitoring team that visits all schools, particularly public secondary schools, to ensure parity in terms of access to resources, and by writing and submitting the report to the Department of Basic Education at the national level every financial year. This can have a positive impact on the academic performance of secondary school learners in Chris Hani West District and the Eastern Cape Province as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in secondary schools by the DBE was a noble idea, as it aimed to improve the quality of education in South African schools despite the challenges. The research has shown that the implementers of the curriculum are experiencing challenges, such as the Progression Policy, overcrowded classrooms, and the lack of resources that hinder the quality of education. On the positive side, some teachers and learners perceive the Progression Policy as partly advantageous to teaching and learning in that it may sometimes produce positive results for schools since learners who are promoted to the next Grade are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards learning. Condoned learners are likely to be motivated and will be reluctant to drop out of classes. Retained learners also become demotivated and eventually become a bad influence in the class. The implementation of the policy (CAPS) has shown both challenges and opportunities for secondary teachers and learners. The lack of resources in secondary schools in Chris Hani West District negatively affected teaching and learning. This has been observed in the poor performance of Grade 12 learners over a number of years. Teaching and learning in secondary schools of Chris Hani West have been badly influenced by overcrowded classes, which contribute to inconducive conditions of Teaching and Learning.

Africa), 2020).

[73] Rudzani Israel Lumadi, "Optimising School Management Strategies: Empowering School Management Teams through Revision of the Learners' Code of Conduct for Effective Discipline Management," *South African Journal of Education* 44, no. si1 (2024): S1–13.

Declarations
Funding: This research did not receive any external funding.
Conflict of Interest: The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.
Data Availability Statement: The data is restricted.

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