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Enhancing the Provision of Quality Education in Limpopo Province

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Motadi Masa Sylvester

*Department of Public Development and Administration
University of Venda, Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou, 0950*

Abstract

The provision of quality education remains a fundamental concern in many regions, particularly in rural areas such as Limpopo Province, South Africa. Over the years, various educational reforms have been introduced to enhance basic education, yet disparities in teacher development, resource allocation, and infrastructure persist. This study explored the extent to which curriculum changes have influenced the quality of basic education in Limpopo Province and aimed to identify strategies for improving teacher development, resource availability, and infrastructure policies. A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating case studies, policy analysis, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the education sector. The findings of this study provided information about the effectiveness of past and present educational reforms while offering recommendations for sustainable improvements in the province's education system.

Keywords: *Basic education, Curriculum reform, Infrastructure, Limpopo Province, Teacher development.*

Introduction and Background to the Study

The foundation of any nation's growth, anywhere on the globe, is education. It is also one of the metrics used to gauge how a given country is developing (Armstrong, 2019). "Education is the most potent weapon we can employ to change the world," Nelson Mandela once said (EDA, 2011). Governments, authorities, and civil society have stressed, according to UNESCO (2020), that developing nations need to invest more in education. They also need to ensure effective administration of educational institutions and adherence to reform initiatives.

However, it is crucial to place more emphasis on the delivery of high-quality education. Accordingly, a UNESCO (2018) report found that good education lowers poverty, boosts income, improves health, spurs economic growth, saves children's lives, promotes peace, lowers child marriage, lowers fertility rates, prevents disaster-related deaths, lowers maternal deaths, advocates for gender equality, and fights HIV/AIDS. The World Declaration on Education for All made it abundantly clear that improving education quality was necessary and advocated making it more accessible and relevant to all people's lives. Quality was also mentioned as a requirement for accomplishing the core objective of equity (UNESCO, 2020).

On the other hand, to provide quality education at all levels, several parties, including the government, parents, students, instructors, the local community, and schools, must work together and show a commitment (UNESCO, 2018). Governments are responsible for ensuring that all children have access to quality education. They must also avoid actions preventing children's education and remove barriers imposed by communities or individuals (Hoadley, Christie & Ward, 2019). As a result, regions of the education sector must continue to work on guaranteeing excellent education at all levels of schooling. Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Agenda also acknowledges the importance of high-quality education for achieving sustainable development. Additionally, it emphasises the necessity of enhancing students' problem-solving, cognitive, interpersonal, and social abilities at all educational levels (UNESCO, 2018).

The focus on international education development has switched from access to quality during the past ten years, despite the fact that the issue of quality education is currently at the forefront of global conversation. This is due to the notion that education's core value is excellence (Howie, 2018). However, attempts to combine access and quality are the biggest issue internationally since even while millions of

children can attend school, they do not acquire the necessary fundamental skills due to the low quality of instruction (Jeynes, 2018). The reform's goals are to raise boys' and girls' performance in terms of measurable learning outcomes, primary completion rates, and secondary entry rates (Lee & Burkham, 2022). The reform includes updating and revising the national curriculum, creating new textbooks for all grade levels and subjects based on the new curriculum, strengthening CPD for currently employed teachers, and enhancing head teachers' (school principals') ability to contribute to the delivery of high-quality education in the classroom (Baatjies, 2018).

Research aim

The study aims to explore how the provision of quality education in Limpopo province in South Africa could be enhanced.

Research Questions

- Has South Africa's basic education improved due to of the changes to the curricula throughout the years?
- What changes in teacher development policy may be made to guarantee the delivery of high-quality education?
- What changes in resource and infrastructure policies can be made to guarantee the delivery of high-quality education?

Problem Statement

Learner performance is one of the indices of education quality (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2020). In the new democratic period, Limpopo, one of South Africa's nine provinces, should contribute to the enhancement and supply of excellent education in public schools. Over the period from 2018 to 2023, Limpopo has been among the provinces with the lowest performance. In terms of educational provision, Limpopo, like every other province in South Africa, is undergoing a period of transformation. In the last four years, a strong need has evolved in Limpopo Province to enhance school administration and student success, resulting in formulating a turnaround plan (Limpopo Department of Education 2011). Aspects of student accomplishment and effective school administration highlight the aims issued by the Limpopo Department of Education and represent the department's appeal for strategies to enhance school management and learner performance (LDoE, 2011).

It is increasingly accepted across the developmental social sciences that economic and social progress is impossible without expanded access to and improvement in the quality of education (Van der Berg & Burger, 2020). The South African government invests far more in education than other African developing nations and the SADC area in particular (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2020). In terms of providing excellent education, the product seems to be subpar. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine approaches to increase access to high-quality education in the South African province of Limpopo.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

It is now widely accepted in all developmental social sciences that economic and social development cannot occur without increased access to and improvement in the quality of education. This study's findings are vital for identifying input-level barriers to quality primary and secondary education in South Africa's Limpopo province.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- Assess whether South Africa's basic education has improved as a result of changes to the curricula over the years.
- Identify and propose necessary modifications to teacher development policies to ensure the delivery of high-quality education.
- Examine and recommend changes in resource allocation and infrastructure policies to enhance the provision of quality education.

Identifying Gaps in Knowledge

Despite extensive research on providing quality education in Limpopo Province, significant gaps in knowledge remain regarding the systematic evaluation of teacher development policies, resource allocation efficiency, and the long-term sustainability of educational reforms. While previous studies have explored various aspects of education quality, many have not fully examined the interplay between curriculum reforms, teacher training, and infrastructure development in ensuring sustainable improvements in learning outcomes. Thaba-Nkadimene (2020) highlights the impact of educational provision on teacher performance and learner outcomes but does not comprehensively address the role of governance

structures and policy implementation in sustaining quality education. This gap necessitates a deeper investigation into how education policies can be better aligned to enhance teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Poor research on resource provisioning strategies in Limpopo's rural and peri-urban schools is another major need. As Ndou (2020) studies educators' views on excellent education in selected public schools, resource disparities' effects on student learning experiences and outcomes across socioeconomic contexts are neglected. Molaudzi and Adeyemo (2022) address how resource provisioning affects learner performance. However, they do not compare how infrastructure and teaching resources affect student performance across Limpopo districts. This study investigates systematic resource allocation and its impact on education equity to fill this gap.

Existing literature also fails to address the issues of underperforming schools and the efficacy of academic treatments. Mohale, Litshani, Mashau and Moyo (2021) analysed academic performance improvement programmes in underperforming rural high schools but did not analyse student achievement over time. Few studies have examined how school leadership and community involvement sustain these outcomes. This study examined how school governance and parental participation affect Limpopo school intervention measures to close this gap. Although policy documents emphasise inclusive education, there is little empirical research on its implementation in Limpopo Province. Makhado, Lebeso, and Maputle (2023) examined primary school students' opinions about epilepsy education and found that life skills education is under-represented. However, how inclusiveness initiatives like special needs teacher training affect provincial education quality is unclear. This issue must be addressed to ensure that education policies encourage fair learning for all students, including those with disabilities. Educational reforms in Limpopo province have received little investigation on their long-term viability. Healthcare improvement methods, according to Mahada, Tshitangano, and Mudau (2023), target health-related learning impediments and indirectly affect education. Sustainability research on quality education projects, especially in rural regions, is lacking. Matlala, Malema, Bopape, and Mphekgwana (2021) explored rural clinic healthcare factors, which may relate to education issues. This study examines how previous and present education policies maintain quality and improve long-term learner outcomes to fill this gap.

There is also little research on education and sustainable development. Modiba (2023) views schooling as a sustainable

development initiative, although Limpopo has little research on how to incorporate education into sustainability goals. This study examines how Limpopo schools are reacting to climate change education, digital transformation, and economic sustainability. Finally, provincial education financing model efficiency research is lacking. In their 2023 study on small-scale farming, Ramukhithi et al. do not examine how financial management practices affect education sustainability. This study examines whether Limpopo's financial systems can support long-term education quality improvements to bridge this gap. This research seeks to fill these knowledge gaps to provide a holistic picture of Limpopo Province's education quality variables and practical recommendations for long-term education system changes.

Literature Review

The Concept of Quality Education Locally, Nationally, and Internationally

Working schools are the foundation for quality education (Maluleka, 2018). Lewin (2017) acknowledges that although excellence is readily articulated informally, attempts to define it officially spark heated and emotive arguments. A quality education emphasises the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of every student, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, or geography, according to McKinsey & Company (2017). Not only for tests, but for life as well, it prepares the youngster. The building of excellent learning settings, the utilisation of high-quality learning materials, and access to qualified instructors are the three main pillars that underpin a quality education (Hopkins, 2017).

Four times in the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act 84 of 1996) is the quality of education mentioned. First, the preamble of SASA outlines the goal of a new national schooling system that would provide all students with an education of steadily higher calibre and, in doing so, establish a solid basis for the growth of all of our people's skills and capacities. Second, Section (8)2 of SASA mandates that the student code of conduct must be focused on creating a structured atmosphere in the classroom that is committed to maintaining and enhancing the calibre of the educational experience. Third, according to Section 20(1a), the primary duty of the school governing board is to advance the institution's goals and work to ensure their achievement by ensuring that all students get high-quality instruction. Finally, the aim is expressed as "to promote

quality education given by the school to all learners at the school" when referring to the duty of the public school's governing body to augment the resources granted by the State in Section 36(1) of SASA (Ravela, 2019).

As measures of high-quality education, Carnoy & Chisholm (2018) list the following:

- Adequate funding.
- Successful quality assurance (to enforce standards).
- A setting that is suitable for teaching and learning.
- Enough staff housing and classrooms in schools.
- Adequate and appropriate personnel and equipment.
- Staff of high calibre and sincere dedication to unadulterated academics.

Gunning (2018) lists the following as markers of high-quality and practical education:

- Graduates' productive and effective performance in society, their fields, and other workplaces.
- Statistics on graduate employment, self-employment rates, and national and worldwide employability.
- Mobility of created labour on a national and worldwide scale.
- The market value or degree of demand for the institutions' other services and research outputs.
- Graduates' level of discipline and patriotism.
- The graduates' and students' international transferability and admission to higher education without prerequisites.
- Positive reviews of a company's services and goods domestically and abroad.
- High capacity for absorption at all levels.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in human capital theory and systems theory as the primary theoretical frameworks. Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education enhance individuals' productivity, leading to improved economic and social outcomes. Becker (1993) argues that quality education fosters skills acquisition, which contributes to national economic growth. In the context of Limpopo Province, investment in teacher training, curriculum reforms, and infrastructure development plays a crucial role in improving educational outcomes (Thaba-

Nkadimene, 2020). It stresses how important it is to have a skilled and educated workforce for social and economic growth. Ndou (2020) points out that improving teachers' professional skills has a direct effect on how well their students do in school and how much they learn. Molaudzi and Adeyemo (2022) also say that how resources are used affects the quality of education because bad infrastructure and teaching tools make it harder to learn. Using the human capital theory in this study helps figure out how investing in education in Limpopo can help people and the community grow.

On the other hand, systems theory sees education as a system with many parts that work together. These parts include the government, schools, teachers, parents, and students. It is emphasised in this theory that all parts must work well together for great education to be achieved (Ndou, 2020). How well educational services work depends on how policies are carried out, resources are distributed, and institutions are run (Molaudzi & Adeyemo, 2022). A South African example is the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), which requires structured government to make sure that schools run smoothly. But, as Mohale, Litshani, Mashau, and Moyo (2021) say, Limpopo schools that aren't doing well often have problems with management that make it hard to teach. The authors of Makhado, Lebese, and Maputle (2023) say that structured educational policies and stronger institutional control can help make the right conditions for better learning. Using systems theory, this study looks at how the different players in the education sector rely on each other to find out what factors help or hurt quality education in Limpopo.

This study looks at how different factors affect the quality of education in Limpopo Province by combining these different theoretical views. These models help us figure out how changes in policies, training for teachers, and allocating resources can improve education results. The human capital theory also helps us figure out how much money we should spend on schooling. Systems theory further shows us how problems with the system's structure and management affect it. Mahada, Tshitangano, and Mudau (2023) say that to make long-lasting changes in education, we need to look at more than just educational policies. We also need to think about health and social problems that affect learning in other ways. Relatively, Matlala, Malema, Bopape, and Mphekgwana (2021) say that government and non-government stakeholders need to work together to provide great education. Lastly, Modiba (2023) says that schools should be seen as long-term projects for development that are in line with world standards for quality education. Looking at things this

way, the study will give a full picture of the problems and chances for making education better in Limpopo Province.

Quality education in South Africa

Feinstein (2018) defines educational quality as the evaluation of educational processes that support the requirement to attain and develop the talents of consumers while also meeting the accountability criteria established by the clients who pay for the process or the educational outcomes. By using quality assurance procedures, these quality outputs need to be continuously evaluated and monitored. A quality education, according to Grant and Osanloo (2020), equips students with the fundamental skills and knowledge they need to survive, grow into their full potential, live and work with dignity, actively contribute to development, improve the quality of their lives, coexist peacefully, make wise decisions, and continue learning. It includes the framework for comprehending and accomplishing excellent education that has been created for the following dimensions: (1) learner characteristics; (2) learning processes; (3) content; and (4) systems.

As a result, the value that a school graduate brings to the community reflects the quality of their education. The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) mentions the quality of education four times. First off, the preamble of SASA states the objective that a new national school system would offer an education of steadily higher quality to all students and, in doing so, establish a solid basis for the development of all of our people's skills and capacities. Second, Section (8)2 of SASA mandates that the student code of conduct must be focused on creating a structured atmosphere in the classroom that is committed to maintaining and enhancing the standard of instruction. Thirdly, according to Section 20(1a) of SASA, the school governing body's primary duty is to advance the institution's best interests and work to ensure its growth by delivering high-quality instruction to all students.

The literature research revealed the quality aspects unique to education, and a new framework was created with the associated attributes. Five dimensions—organisation and governance, financial resources, physical resources, teaching-learning process, and supplemental process—are used to categorise the 70 qualities found (Blessing, Thom-otuyal & Dorothy, 2019). The standard of teaching and learning that must occur within a school determines the quality of education. Performance results in the learning environment are the greatest indicators of high-quality teaching and learning. According to

Taylor (2019), performance is the primary sign that learning has taken place since it is the immediate result of learning. In his definition of learning, Taylor & Moyana (2020:25) call it "a persistent change in performance or performance potential that emerges from experience and engagement with the world." Therefore, success on related tasks must be demonstrated for learning to be seen. Although learning has a significant impact on performance, poor performance may not always indicate insufficient learning. Stols, Oliver & Grayson (2018) go on to state that students' decisions on how to study are also influenced by the calibre of the instruction and the attitude of the teachers. Last but not least, the objective is expressed as "to the improve of quality education given by the school to all learners at the school" when referring to the duty of the governing body of the public school to complement the resources allocated by the State in Section 36(1) of SASA.

Minimum Standards of Education in Limpopo

The country's National Development Plan may be used to assess minimum educational levels. According to Shabalala (2019), the NDP is the social process through which a country harnesses and mobilises all available resources (human and material) for the aim of positively modifying its environment and eventually enhancing the social, economic, and political lives of its citizens. It is a comprehensive process that requires the collective will and efforts of the people. The NDP is conceptualised by Shepherd (2021:20) as "a process of systematic transformation of the overall social, economic, political, scientific, and technological life of a nation through an effective, coherent, co-ordinated management system and result-orientated social mobilisation strategy in which the citizens participate and exhibit positive attitudinal commitment in the overall reconstruction process for the improved human conditions of the people."

The Limpopo Department of Education stated its aim and objective in its Strategic Performance Plan 2015/2016–2019/2020: "Excellence in the provision of innovative, high-quality basic education." National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996); South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996); General and Further Education and Training and Quality Assurance Act, 2001 (Act 58 of 2001); and Education White Paper on Early Childhood Development and Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (both Acts 58 of 2001). (DoE 1995).

General Criteria for the Assessment of Quality Education

The quality of education may be judged using United Nations-established standards. According to UNESCO (2020), education learning objectives for global citizens can be classified along three dimensions: knowledge (geographical and historical knowledge, diversity of society, and foreign and intercultural communication approaches); attitudes (openness, positive orientation, sensitivity, self-esteem, respect, and tolerance); and skills (technical, critical, comparative, communication, coping, and resilience). According to UNESCO (2020), the UNESCO objectives cannot be completely attained or maintained without quality, access, and fairness in education.

Shifting policy interest to quality education and learning outcomes

The worldwide policy community is enthralled with education quality (UNESCO, 2018). Since the early 1990s, policymakers have shifted their focus from access, enrolment, and years of education completed to learning, skill development, and teacher quality. In recent years, this policy shift has gained momentum for various reasons (Van der Berg, 2018). First and foremost, most developing nations have achieved universal primary education (UPE) or are on course to do so in the next years, with net primary enrolment percentages above 95% (Taylor & Yu, 2018). Improving the 'quality' of elementary education and eliminating inequities in post-primary education are emerging as new problems on the national policy agenda, having reached or about to reach UPE. In fact, by the 1990s, several Latin American nations had already universalised access to basic education, and, not unexpectedly, quality concerns became the focal point of regional policy talks (Teu, 2022).

In addition to the change toward putting learning and quality concerns at the forefront of national and international policy, a second trend is noteworthy (Obasi and Caldwell, 2020). In the past, excellent education primarily referred to the circumstances for learning, which many regard as the primary inputs to schooling, such as school facilities, textbooks, instructional time, and skilled instructors. At worldwide conferences on Education for All held in Ndou (2020), the promotion of quality education and the fulfilment of fundamental learning requirements were seen as essential parts of international policy objectives. In addition to a broad 'quality' objective (EFA Goal 6), participants drafted an official document stating that "access to quality basic education is a fundamental right for all" and specifying the

necessary conditions for quality education, including well-trained teachers and active learning techniques; adequate facilities and instructional materials; clearly defined, well-taught, and accurately assessed curricular knowledge and skills; and a healthy, safe, gender-balanced learning environment (Motshekga, 2019).

In the 21st century, the idea and assessment of excellent education are evolving. Today, quality is seen more in terms of learning outcomes and less in terms of the environment that facilitates learning. This move from quality as inputs to quality as results reflects, in part, the rising availability of (comparative) data on learning levels and inequalities from an unprecedented number of international, regional, and national evaluations (Mbazima, 2018). Donors are prioritising the monitoring of learning outcomes (rather than the enabling circumstances for learning) and letting national decision-makers choose the most effective mix of policy levers to promote learning outcomes (Hoadley, 2020).

3. Research Design & Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach within an interpretivist research paradigm to explore the factors influencing the provision of quality education in Limpopo Province, South Africa. A case study design was selected to provide an in-depth examination of how educational policies, teacher development, and resource allocation impact learning outcomes (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022).

Data collection involved open-ended interviews, document analysis, and policy reviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with educators, school administrators, and policymakers to gather insights into their experiences and perspectives on quality education (Dang, Van Nguyen & Tran, 2024). The interviews allowed participants to openly express their ideas, helping the researcher uncover major difficulties and solutions.

To place the study in educational contexts, government reports, policy documents, and academic literature were examined (Hossain, Alam, & Ali, 2024). Reviewing historical research and education policy triangulated findings and helped explain Limpopo's education governance systems.

Participants directly involved in education policy and implementation were purposively sampled (Modugno, 2024). This captured the views of teachers, administrators, education officers, and curriculum specialists.

The chosen participants shed light on Limpopo school policy implementation and resource management.

The data was analysed thematically. Policy frameworks and governance, teacher development and curricular reforms, and resource allocation and infrastructure were significant concerns (Naeem et al., 2024). These themes organised the investigation, revealing patterns and correlations between education quality factors. The study followed ethical guidelines for confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation (Pham, 2024). This report will inform debates on improving education policies and actions in Limpopo Province to improve the quality of education.

4. Results & Discussion

This part presents and analyses the data using both theme analysis and interpretivist theory. The research team's objective is to identify recurring themes, subjects, and patterns in the data to summarise the results. These results give an overview of a selection of issues that were prioritised and attained a high degree of saturation throughout the theme analysis.

Quality of Education in Limpopo Province

Despite ongoing reforms to improve basic education in South Africa, Limpopo Province continues to experience significant disparities in education quality (Spaull, 2021). Despite national emphasis on quality education, many learners in Limpopo, especially those from rural and historically disadvantaged backgrounds, remain marginalised. (Gustafsson & Patel, 2018). Policies from the time of apartheid produced a dual education system that favoured schools with lots of resources in cities while underfunding schools in rural areas (Fleisch, 2018). So, even though many people in Limpopo are enrolled in basic education, many students have trouble because their schools aren't well-equipped or have enough trained teachers. Standardised tests from across the country show that students in wealthier provinces do better than their Limpopo peers because their schools have more resources and they can get help with their studies (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2020). There are still not enough funds and people working in the province's education system, which lowers the level of lessons and learning experiences. To solve these problems, specific steps need to be taken to improve teacher training, ensure that resources are shared more fairly, and ensure that students who are on the outside get equal chances to learn.

Curriculum Shifts in Enhancing Basic Education

South Africa has implemented several curriculum modifications to match education with democratic objectives and global standards since apartheid ended (Heckman, 2019). Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was designed to create an outcomes-based education (OBE) system; however, it was too complicated to implement, especially in underfunded schools (Armstrong, 2019). The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) followed, simplifying the curriculum while maintaining academic rigour, but it was criticised for lacking topic content (Baatjies, 2018). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) sets learning objectives, teaching methodologies, and assessment procedures for each grade (Van der Berg & Shepherd, 2020). CAPS strives to standardise education and guarantee students learn strong core skills; however, it has been criticised for limiting teacher freedom and prioritising evaluation over holistic learning (Hoadley, Christie & Ward, 2019). Wealthier schools have superior teacher training and access to learning materials, while rural Limpopo schools lack resources and poorly prepared educators. These inequities undermine curricular changes, requiring tailored interventions to narrow learning gaps and improve instruction in all schools.

Teacher Development Policy and Its Impact on Education Quality

Teacher development is a key factor in determining the standard of education, and many policies have been put in place to make sure that teachers are properly trained and have the tools they need to teach effectively (Hopkins, 2017). Changes were made to the teacher training system after apartheid. It went from the COTEP framework, which was not a unified system, to the MRTEQ framework, which aims to make teacher education more consistent and guarantee professional competence (Ramathan, 2017). MRTEQ focusses on academic, vocational, and professional skills, making sure that teachers not only know about their subjects but also know how to teach them effectively (Grant & Osanloo, 2020). But there are still not enough teachers, and some teachers don't get enough training. This is especially true in rural schools in Limpopo, where many teachers lack sufficient classroom management skills and professional development access (Lewin, 2017). Additionally, limited incentives for teachers in rural areas result in high turnover rates, further affecting education quality. Schools in well-resourced provinces offer competitive salaries and career advancement

opportunities, attracting highly qualified teachers, while rural schools continue to rely on underqualified and untrained educators. These disparities directly impact student performance, as learners in poorly staffed schools struggle to receive consistent and high-quality instruction. Addressing these challenges requires sustained investment in teacher training programmes, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that all educators are well-equipped to facilitate effective learning experiences.

Infrastructure and Resource Allocation for Quality Education

The availability of adequate infrastructure and learning resources plays a crucial role in determining the quality of education that learners receive (Lee & Burkham, 2022). In South Africa, the National Norms and Standards for School Funding policy was established to ensure that public schools receive equitable funding, with priority given to historically disadvantaged schools (Department of Basic Education, 2018). However, significant inequalities persist in the allocation of resources, particularly between wealthy (Quintile 5) and underprivileged (Quintile 1-3) schools (Taylor, 2019). Many schools in Limpopo lack basic infrastructure, including classrooms, sanitation facilities, libraries, and science laboratories, which negatively impacts learning outcomes (Blessing, Thom-Otuyal & Dorothy, 2019). Additionally, shortages of learning materials, such as textbooks and digital learning tools, hinder students' ability to engage effectively with the curriculum. In contrast, urban schools in well-resourced provinces have modernised learning environments, equipped with technology, libraries, and well-trained teachers, further widening the education gap. Government efforts to improve school infrastructure have not been sufficient to address the existing disparities, as funding constraints and logistical challenges continue to delay critical improvements in Limpopo schools. To ensure equitable learning conditions, there is a need for a targeted approach that prioritises infrastructure development and resource allocation in underfunded schools, ensuring that all learners have access to a conducive learning environment.

Conclusions

Since education is a cornerstone of national growth everywhere on the globe, the province of Limpopo needs to focus more on providing high-quality instruction. On the other hand, in order to provide high-quality education at all levels, several stakeholders—including the government,

parents, students, instructors, the local community, and schools—need to work together and show dedication.

The Limpopo Department of Education said in its Strategic Performance Plan 2015/2016-2019/2020 that its aim and objective are to "Excellence in Provisioning of Innovative Quality Basic Education." The National Education Policy Act of 1996 (Act 27 of 1996), the South African Schools Act of 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), the General and Further Education and Training and Quality Assurance Act of 2001 (Act 58 of 2001), the Education White Paper on Early Childhood Development, and the Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education were used to create the vision and mission of the Limpopo Department of Education (DoE 1995).

As one of South Africa's nine provinces, Limpopo should help to enhance and provide high-quality education at public schools in the new democratic period. In the previous five years, Limpopo has been one of the provinces with the worst performance. Like every other province in South Africa, Limpopo is undergoing change in the area of educational delivery. In the last four years, the Limpopo Province has seen an urgent need to enhance school administration and student accomplishment. This requirement resulted in the creation of a turnaround plan (Limpopo Department of Education 2011:29). Aspects of student accomplishment and effective school administration highlight the objectives set out by the Limpopo Department of Education and represent the department's appeal for strategies to enhance both learner achievement and school management (LDoE, 2011:29).

The Curricular and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), South Africa's current school curriculum policy, is viewed by some as prescriptive (Taylor & Moyana 2020). Quality, according to the CAPS policy, is found in the precise definition of goal, procedure, content, and learning evaluation. The CAPS curriculum gives voice to the goal of ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values required for self-fulfillment and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country, regardless of their socioeconomic background, race, gender, physical ability, or intellectual ability. The curriculum's goal is to make sure children learn things and use them in ways that are relevant to their own lives. The curriculum is organised in terms of instructional strategies, subject matter, and evaluation criteria. Here, the curriculum dictates how students will be taught in class, including the use of textbooks and other teaching strategies. Each grade's curriculum demonstrates a growth from simplex to complex, and both the quality and quantity are effective in giving a high-class education. With baseline

assessments, formal evaluations, and informal assessments, the programme evaluates students' active and critical learning. For each grade, the CAPS curriculum is designed to aspire to high standards.

Recommendations

To enhance the quality of education in Limpopo Province, there is a need for comprehensive reforms in key areas such as teacher recruitment and retention, curriculum implementation, resource allocation, and infrastructure development. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach, including government intervention, policy revisions, and increased investment in education. The following recommendations provide practical strategies to improve educational outcomes and ensure that all learners have access to high-quality education.

Change the structure of teacher pay so as to attract and retain good teachers

Bursaries alone cannot retain competent instructors or attract enough highly qualified recruits. The greatest teachers must be attracted and kept in the classroom via some kind of teacher reward. The lack of an age-wage gradient in South Africa discourages highly competent individuals from entering or staying in the field. If improving the quality of instruction for the next generation is prioritised, modifications to the compensation system for teachers that were first suggested in 2008 should be (re)introduced and continued.

There should be carefully considered methods for tying teacher compensation to student success. Given that there is presently minimal information regarding student achievement across elementary schools that is publicly accessible, it might be argued that the primary school level has the greatest need for some incentive system. If the Annual National Assessments (ANA) for at least one primary school grade were externally verified (as suggested below), it would be possible to determine how well primary schools are doing. The results of the matriculation examination and a grade 9 ANA that has received external validation may be used as indicators of school success in secondary institutions. It's crucial that schools that show progress in student performance, not only top-performing schools, should be recognised. This would guarantee that the lowest-performing schools would have the most motivation to produce progress.

An incentivised programme to improve teacher content knowledge

Instead of paying teachers for generating strong student achievement (a teacher outcome), one option is to reward them for displaying competence (a teacher input). Here, one may study the Chilean system, which rewards instructors financially for scoring well on assessments of their subject expertise (the AVDI programme).

The suggestion for South Africa is that there should be a chance for teachers to sit for an exam every year that is specifically tailored to the subject matter they teach. Each topic should be tested within each educational band. Teachers who elect to partake should take the exam for the topic they teach and the highest band. A more broad-based exam would probably be more suited for Foundation Phase instructors. A certain number of instructors should get the cash incentive to accurately budget. To ensure that instructors are tested often but not excessively, this should be distributed across, say, three years. The incentive should be substantial enough to encourage instructors to choose to take the exam and to spend time enhancing their topic knowledge in advance, which is truly the goal of the proposal. The number of eligible instructors each year should also be high enough to promote participation by more than just a small group of people who would benefit financially.

The design might also be changed to reward instructors with more experience. This would provide the greatest instructors with a much-needed incentive to stay in the field. Additionally, dedicating a portion of the bonuses to certain provinces and quintiles would, first, guarantee that equality issues were handled and, second, provide more incentives for better instructors to accept positions in historically underserved regions.

Some of the suggestions made here may need to be modified since implementing such software would need to be carefully considered. To learn more about the test design and cost projections, for instance, it would be wise to look more carefully at the current Chilean and Brazilian programmes. It could also be a good idea to implement a pilot programme to assess how such a plan might affect teacher topic understanding and possibly even student accomplishment. A randomised assessment using treatment and control school populations is recommended.

In theory, though, the simultaneous but independent implementation of self-administered diagnostic tests, professional development courses that focus on content knowledge, and a reward for passing a subject knowledge test could be very complementary and foster a situation in

which teachers are aware of their knowledge gaps, can improve these, and have a strong incentive to do so.

Improve the role definition, capacity and intervention tools of districts

It is necessary to have a better grasp of how districts operate. Particularly, the support and monitoring functions should be carefully examined and planned so that they do not conflict with one another.

The capacity of district offices should be considered while developing their duties. What may legitimately be delegated to district offices may be constrained by capacity issues. Alternatively, it could boost district-level capacity by clarifying job descriptions and altering how district officials are selected.

Support for schools must be improved. The emphasis right now should be on enhancing the availability of intervention tools that district officials and anyone aiding schools can utilise readily, since it takes time to develop the appropriate level of professional capability at the district level. Collaboration with specialists outside the government and meticulous tool testing should be part of the tool development process.

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