

An Exploration of the Monitoring and Support Mechanisms for the Teaching of the Life Orientation Curriculum in High Schools in the Fort Beaufort District, Eastern Cape Province of South Africa

Toyin Mary Adewumi¹ and Yinka Titilawo^{2*}

*¹Faculty of Education, ²Faculty of Science and Agriculture, University of Fort Hare,
PB X1314, Alice 5700, South Africa
E-mail: olayinkatemi@yahoo.co.uk

KEYWORDS Course Moderation. Learning Area. Learner's Portfolio. Principal. Teacher

ABSTRACT This paper explored the monitoring and support mechanisms in place for teaching the Life Orientation curriculum. The paper was located within the interpretivist paradigm and used a qualitative research design. Data was collected mainly through individual interviews held with 12 participants made up of teachers and principals in six high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education District in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Data analysis was done by clustering common themes and writing stories to uncover the main issues that arose. The findings revealed that there were some forms of support and monitoring strategies in place for the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum. The paper concluded that the support from the Department was not adequate and so it recommended that the current forms of support and monitoring should be supplemented with more frequent school visits by Department officials.

INTRODUCTION

Overall school administration and the co-ordination of the curriculum in the schools are regulated by the Department of Education (Sayed 2004). The responsibilities of the Department of Education include: the development of curriculum for the various levels of schooling; establishing standards for material resources, facilities and equipment; allotting money for facilities, equipment, programmes and salaries; and supervising the preparation of teachers to teach subjects such as Life Orientation, among other subjects (Sayed 2004).

Ertmer (2005) states that support from departments of education is often difficult to attain. This could mean that support from principals is also difficult to get. However, in a study by McLaughlin (2014) at the school level, colleagues and other teachers were considered the most helpful support in implementing the curriculum by offering advice and encouragement.

Not only do schools get limited support from the Department of Education but in many schools non-examinable subjects, including Life Orientation, have been given a reduced time allowance, fewer resources and generally a lower profile (Njlesani 2012). It is, therefore not surprising that supporting Life Orientation in schools might be a difficult task. However, it was not clear what the situation is like in high schools in the Fort Beaufort District specifically, hence one aspect of this study attempted to assess the availability of material resources and equipment as well as monitoring and support mechanisms.

The tendency to ignore Life Orientation seems to have been the most formidable obstacle to excellence (Prinsloo 2007). Life Orientation is supposed to be given a high priority in schools. The literature argues that Life Orientation is the only subject in the school curriculum that has significant potential to promote learners' physical, social, psychological and moral development (Rooth 2005; Christiaans 2006; Prinsloo 2007). Thus school authorities need to create supporting mechanisms to address the many challenges facing Life Orientation in schools.

Prinsloo (2007) further explains that evaluation of teaching in classrooms can and should take many forms involving the stakeholders – teachers and principal – who have primary respon-

Address for correspondence:

Toyin Mary Adewumi
Faculty of Education
University of Fort Hare
PB X1314, Alice 5700, South Africa
E-mail: toyinadewumi28@gmail.com

sibility for the instructional programme. Thus the challenging responsibility for principals according to Prinsloo (2007:161) is to “provide multiple opportunities for teachers to examine their practices, to reflect on those practices, to collaborate with others as they are assessing the practices, and then empower these professionals to act on the many lessons learnt from these endeavours, as they attempt to influence teaching and learning through specific instructional leadership actions.”

Indeed, school heads’ leadership support is crucial to the success of any curriculum implementation as heads should create a favourable climate as well as cordial working conditions. According to Coleman (2005), instructional leadership support is learning-centred. Its main concerns are likely to be curriculum, teaching and learning, and the monitoring of learning. Skills expected from these leaders are the ones that lead directly to the improvement of learners’ performance.

Life Orientation teachers will always be willing to work in a healthy environment. If the head as an instructional leader is effective, it is likely that Life Orientation teachers within the system will feel committed to and comfortable with the programme being implemented, as long as they are satisfied that the school will run smoothly (Van Deventer 2009). Maslow’s theory of motivation assumes that it is relatively easy to supervise individuals or teachers who are intrinsically motivated (Everard et al. 2004). However, these teachers need professional support to keep them in line with new developments. Sigilai and Bett (2013) share the same view as they stress the need for instructional supervisors such as the District Education Officers (DEOs), heads of schools and heads of departments to maintain the standard of education as expected by the Government. The quality of these educational authorities is expected to determine the curriculum implementation process.

School heads and district officials as the custodians of curriculum implementation have to monitor it (Sayed 2004). At the school level, school heads are the chief instructional supervisors. They provide the means for curriculum implementation through timetabling, classroom allocation, textbook allocation, syllabus and all instructional materials as well as creating a conducive atmosphere for an effective teaching and learning process (Sigilai and Bett 2013). Further

guidelines are given by Van Deventer (2009) on the roles of the school head in guiding and monitoring Life Orientation implementation through ensuring that schemes of work, lesson plans and records of marks are prepared regularly and in accordance with the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

Above all, the head as an instructional leader has to monitor the actions of Life Orientation teachers and what is happening in the schools and report on it to the district officials. This is in line with the findings of the U.S. Department of Education (2004:11) that successful school heads “analyse instruction and students’ learning through regular classroom observation and provision of detailed feedback to teachers that supports instructional improvement.” The school head and heads of department should provide guidance and make sure that teachers have the necessary skills and use the correct teaching methods or strategies (Ornstein and Hunkins 2004).

However, while there is a general agreement that the school head is a key person in enhancing the teaching and learning process, research shows that school heads still have limited knowledge of the Life Orientation teacher’s job description (Rooth 2005). Moreover, despite the limited research to date, there is continued interest in the way heads of schools run their school activities in order to enhance quality subject teaching (Hoy and Miskel 2005). The head of a school has a great task to monitor all the school systems, from the distribution of resources and their use to monitoring (Lupton 2005). The researchers agree with this assertion as lack of monitoring can cause unfair distribution of resources among departments, thereby adversely affecting the implementation of a subject like Life Orientation as well as conflicts among staff members.

Van Deventer confirms the problem of heavy workload in South Africa, although he cites the problem of additional sources of income as existing mainly among teachers in rural areas. In some rural areas the head has a heavy load of work and does not have enough time to observe his teachers; while heads do not find it easy to carry out effective supervision due to large numbers of staff in urban areas (Galton and MacBeath 2008). In most Sub-Saharan countries, Life Orientation or Life Skills suffers from a lack of qualified personnel to monitor it, as well as a

shortage of management personnel with sufficient knowledge of the subject (Tiendrebéogo et al. 2003).

It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the school head, as an instructional leader, and the DEOs occasionally undertake internal and external monitoring of curriculum implementation in schools. Their main objective would be that of checking the achievement of goals and set standards so as to recommend areas for improvement and identify those which need staff development or in-service programmes (Panday 2007).

Objectives

The main objective of this paper was to explore the monitoring and support mechanisms in place for the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum in high schools in the Fort Beaufort District (Eastern Cape) of South Africa. Hence, this paper sought to: verify what support mechanisms are available for Life Orientation teachers and the adequacy of the support; examine the types of support that Life Orientation teachers expect from the school or department and identify the monitoring strategies in place for the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This paper was qualitative in nature and used a case study design based largely on interviews. This method was chosen on the strength of its ability to provide an in-depth and detailed account of the phenomenon under study, enabling the researchers to discover things that might not have become apparent through more superficial research (Denscombe 2001).

Research Instruments

The research instrument used during the investigation was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to solicit teachers and principals' opinions on how the monitoring and support mechanisms put in place benefited teachers in teaching Life Orientation. The focus was on how the principal or the deputy is supporting the teaching of Life Orientation in school, the adequacy of the support the school gets from the department officials in the teaching of Life Orientation, the types of sup-

port Life Orientation teachers expect from the school or the department officials, how the principal or the deputy monitors the teaching of Life Orientation, how the department officials monitor the teaching of Life Orientation and the benefits of the monitoring strategies. The interviews allowed the researcher to get close to the data and to get first-hand information about the social world in question, thus enabling the researcher to understand the definitions, concepts and meanings that respondents attributed to their social world (Kuada 2012).

Participants

A sample of twelve participants, six teachers and six principals in six high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education District in the Eastern Cape was purposively selected. This District where the sample was selected was made up of six high school clusters. The respondent schools were selected by means of purposive sampling within each of the six clusters to avoid possible bias in selection – one high school from each cluster. The six schools chosen were on the basis of convenience within each cluster.

Procedures

The researchers sought permission to carry out the study from the Provincial Department of Education. Furthermore, the researchers sought permission from the principals of each school selected to arrange the dates for conducting the interviews. The researchers collected data using hand-written notes, and tape-recorded interviews from all participants during official working hours. All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, and all the participants were asked to review the transcripts for verification and to sign the agreement forms allowing the researchers to use the interview data. The semi-structured interview procedure first allowed the researchers to ask a series of structured questions before going deeper by using open-ended questions in order to obtain more data and allow respondents to express themselves (Adams and Cox 2008). As a data gathering technique, the semi-structured interview's flexibility and adaptability permitted the researchers to probe for deeper responses, follow up leads, elaborate on original responses, obtain additional and more detailed data, and clarify answers (Creswell 2007; Adams and Cox 2008).

RESULTS

This paper endeavoured to respond to the main research question, which sought to investigate the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum in high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education District. However, this paper reports on one of the sub-questions that sought to explore the monitoring and support mechanisms put in place benefited teachers in teaching Life Orientation. The findings of the paper are discussed below. In the paper, teacher and principal participants are abbreviated as T1-T6 and P1-P6 respectively.

Support Mechanisms Available for Life Orientation Teachers and the Adequacy of the Support

The paper attempted to explore what support is provided by the Department officials and school principals for teachers implementing the Life Orientation curriculum in the Fort Beaufort District. Particularly in view of the challenges inherent in teaching Life Orientation, and the fact that a number of teachers find themselves teaching the subject without having been given the appropriate initial training, it is desirable that the Department especially should put in place as many support mechanisms as possible to help teachers implement the curriculum and achieve its objectives. The following are some of the comments from the participants:

T3 explained:

The principal gets involved in resolving issues and problems arising from Life Orientation teaching and learners by working with me to find solutions. I think the support is adequate.

T4 said:

The principal is very supportive. She also teaches Life Orientation at grade 8. She has a similar background and training for Life Orientation teaching.

One teacher (T5) was more qualified in her comments about the support available within the school:

T5 stated:

The support has only been a verbal affirmation to help, but the textbooks requested have not been bought. However, the head facilitates my meetings with parents and takes up the issues when they are beyond me. The support could be adequate if textbooks are provided.

Responses were also sought from the participant teachers and principals on how the district officers supported the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. Participants confirmed that they received support from the Department of Education in the form of funds, advice, materials, information, training workshops, course moderation, and so on. However, the majority stated that the support from the Department was not adequate.

T1 commented:

The Department provides the school with learning materials, files and updates information for teaching and assessment projects. But the Department doesn't care about our problems, they're not even aware of these problems, so their support is not adequate.

T5 stated:

I get nothing from the Department of Education in terms of support. The subject adviser promised to visit, but did not come.

P1 pointed out:

We get training, funds, and advice from the Department and subject advisers. Yes, the department is trying, but the support is not enough. Although we get what we are supposed to get as a province, but the Department can do more in the areas of funds and visitation.

P4 disclosed:

The training and workshops organised by the Department are just for two to three days – they are not long enough to bring about the desired results.

From the above discussion, the participant principals confirmed what the teachers said: that although schools received some forms of support from the Department, this is not adequate, especially since the schools are so poorly resourced and the communities they serve are so poor. It is thus not surprising that additional funding featured prominently in the principals' comments.

Types of Support that Life Orientation Teachers Expect from the School or Department

Life Orientation teachers were asked about the types of support they expected to be provided by the school and the Department of Education since the majority of them responded that the support they received from the Department was inadequate.

T1 said:

I expect that the Life Orientation Subject Advisor ... should visit schools, interact with LO teachers and communicate his findings to the Department.

T2 and T4 made similar points:

T2 pointed out:

I would expect class visits, but the teachers' body [SADTU] does not allow this from the Department because of the previous experiences from the apartheid time.

T4 noted:

There should be frequent visits to the school to do on-site support and to follow up on the quality of teaching. Though, SADTU does not allow criticism of teachers, which are usually done by the Department with the wrong approach.

T5 explained:

I would like to be trained for LO teaching and counselling so I can help the learners with the issues that are coming up in my LO class. I'd also like the subject advisor to visit the school and provide me with guidance for teaching LO.

T6 thought an additional member of staff should be allocated to schools (something unheard of in such schools, yet taken for granted in affluent schools, especially in developed countries):

I think there's a need for a special teachers' officer in school who can handle problems as they come up and can also go out and liaise with social workers, the police, families and the Department, so that Life Orientation teachers won't use up teaching hours doing all this. The special teacher should be empowered to be able to access resources that can't be accessed by Life Orientation teachers for needy learners (T6).

The major discovery from the discussions on the issue is that the respondents wanted more support in the areas of training, guidance and counselling, and regular visits to school by subject advisers. These were some of their responses – the majority of them focused on or at least mentioned the need for more visits from subject advisers.

Monitoring Strategies for Life Orientation

Information on monitoring strategies in place for the teaching of Life Orientation was sought from participant teachers and principals. Some of their responses were as follows:

T1 and T4 respectively revealed that Life Orientation teaching is *not* monitored in their schools. The following were their comments:

T1 disclosed:

There is no established monitoring system for LO teaching.

T4 commented:

The school is small and the teaching staff are few. Therefore, there is no monitoring, but the principal's monitoring is based on trust of the teacher's capacity. The onus is on me as the teacher to ensure the subject's taught effectively.

One of the participant principals (P4) confirmed what teachers T1 and T4 stated above, perhaps from a surprising point of view. He commented that:

There is no official way of monitoring the Life Orientation teacher because he is good at what he is doing. I have never had any reason to doubt his abilities (P4).

On the other hand, T3 and T6 disclosed that:

Sometimes, the principal does classroom visits and provides guidance (T3).

She (the principal) monitors through the timetable. She ensures that teachers attend classes. The head of department also ensures that the Life Orientation teachers do their jobs (T6).

However, in some of the other selected high schools there are different ways by which the principals monitor the teaching of Life Orientation. P1 and P3 respectively said as follows:

P1 said:

Monitoring is done through HODS and subject heads – the subject head for LO reports to the HOD. The LO activities are monitored once in a term. The subject head collects LO teachers' files and passes them to the HOD, who in turn passes to the principal – the officials moderate the documents at each level. The subject advisers are also involved. Class visits are done when there's need for it. Class visits are done for scoring teachers' performance – this is for the purpose of determining teacher's progression and salary increment.

P3 said:

I have an HOD – as the principal, I'm the overseer. Fortnightly, the HOD reviews the learners' work.

P5 and P6 also pointed out:

I provide out-of-class support to teachers and learners. I also provide guidance to the

teachers and learners. I review examination papers to ensure its (sic) quality (P5).

It is done like all other learning areas. We do class visits, we inspect Life Orientation teachers' work through the HOD (P6).

It was clear from the information gathered that in some cases principals do not monitor the teaching of Life Orientation. However, as it was confirmed above, the principals had been supportive in the teaching of Life Orientation.

It could also be established from the information gathered that there were different ways by which the principals monitored the teaching of Life Orientation. In some schools, monitoring is done once a term. Although this would constitute frequent intervals in terms of the official requirements of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), this is a relatively long interval considering the fact that some of these teachers are not qualified and may need consistent monitoring and support. It could be inferred from the information gathered that many of the selected schools lack adequate monitoring, since some schools do not monitor the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum at all.

The provincial Departments of Education are responsible for most of the schools in South Africa. Therefore, it is not out of place to seek information from the participants on how the local Department officials monitor, and the benefits of the monitoring mechanism in the implementation of Life Orientation. Examples of how the Department monitors the teaching of Life Orientation were given as course moderation, and examining teachers and learners' portfolios, but most of this activity was at a distance, and school visits seemed rare.

P1 explained:

Class visiting was used as a monitoring system during the apartheid period, so it's not done now, so that it may not be seen as reinforcing the system of the past... but it is highly needed. Subject advisors' visits have positive impact on the teachers.

T2 commented:

There's no monitoring through school visits, but through course moderation, reviewing of teacher's and learners' portfolios, which contain files of class work, learners' marks. Through this the Department is able to evaluate teachers' work. Class visiting would be ideal, but the teachers' body [SADTU] does not allow class visits from the Department.

Unsurprisingly, the principals were more inclined than the teachers to bemoan the rarity of class visits:

P2 said:

Constant on-site visitation is required, especially for new Life Orientation educators.

Cluster meetings, however, seem to have become a beneficial substitute for individual class visits by Department officials; however, it is significant that the monitoring focus at these meetings appears to be on reviewing portfolios (that is, monitoring work done, and teacher accountability) rather than on interacting around actual teaching. These points emerge clearly in the responses of P5, P3, and particularly T5:

We also have cluster meetings where we develop common papers – this helps the teachers to work faster. The monitoring strategies are beneficial because they help teachers to work faster. (P5)

The Department of Education never came to me, but I have been involved in cluster moderation where teachers' portfolios are reviewed. I can say the course moderation is helpful, though I do not know if I am doing the right thing with the way I am handling Life Orientation because I was not trained to teach Life Orientation (T5).

There are subject advisors who organise meetings and workshops with Life Orientation teachers. There is common assessment implemented for all schools by the Department. It benefits Life Orientation teaching because Life Orientation teachers cannot just do their own thing. The Department ensures they keep with the standard expected of them as Government provides funds for the implementation of Life Orientation (P3).

One result of monitoring with an emphasis on accountability and work done, rather than on engaging teachers on teaching in the classroom, may be a tendency for teachers to focus on performance and to fabricate marks:

T4 said:

I can't really say the monitoring strategies are beneficial, because some teachers cook up marks for learners when it's time for course moderation.

DISCUSSION

This paper explored the monitoring and support mechanisms in place for the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum in high

schools in the Fort Beaufort District in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This paper found that there were some forms of support available from the principals for the teaching of the Life Orientation curriculum. In terms of the adequacy of the support provided, most of the Life Orientation teachers were of the opinion that the support they received from their principals was adequate.

One aspect of the study established that trained Life Orientation teachers in the selected Fort Beaufort District had between one and five years' teaching experience. This means that these teachers had relatively little teaching experience in this learning area. Therefore, there is a particular need for consistent support in this sector (new or inexperienced teachers) for them to be able to fully implement the Life Orientation curriculum. Yet a concern was raised by the participant principals and teachers that many subject advisers did not come to visit schools (or could not because of resistance on the part of the leading teacher union), and had ignored Life Orientation despite some of these Life Orientation teachers not having been trained.

The South African study of Van der Walt and De Klerk (2006) found that new teachers required more advice, encouragement and support from their heads for the successful execution of their duties. Therefore, if new Life Orientation teachers are not assisted, the Life Orientation curriculum is less likely to be effectively implemented by such teachers.

It was also established that the support mechanisms provided by the Department of Education are in the form of funds, advice materials, information, workshops and training, and course moderation. However, it was indicated that the support from the Department of Education was not adequate. There was a concern that two of the Life Orientation teachers had not received any form of support from the Department of Education in the form of workshops/training and advice.

According to Rogan and Grayson (2003), the construct "support from outside agencies" describes the kinds of action undertaken by outside organisations such as provincial and district education offices to influence practices either by support or sanction, and the role of the District Education Officers (DEOs) to see that standards are maintained. They are there as quality assurance officers to provide schools with

expertise and professional development courses. In many developing countries, outside agencies may also involve international development agencies such as World Vision and local or international NGOs, which often provide teachers and learners with materials like teaching kits or textbooks.

Non-material support is mostly provided in the form of professional development. These involve in-service training where teachers' skills can be upgraded. This is probably one of the most visible and obvious ways in which outside agencies attempt to bring change in schools (Karsten et al. 2000). Therefore, non-support can also be regarded as a sub-construct of school capacity. To bring about change, there is also a need for outside agencies to monitor the implementation process. This is mainly the duty of the district officers. They have to inspect schools at least once in two years so as to give feedback to teachers on their performance. It is their duty to see that the Life Orientation curriculum is implemented according to policy documents.

The paper also inquired into the kind of support the LO teachers *expected* from the school principals and the Department of Education. It emerged that the participant teachers wanted more support in the areas of training, counselling, guidance, advice, and regular visits to the school by subject advisors. It was established that there should be offices for specialist teachers to help the Life Orientation teachers, who would handle learners' problems as they arose, liaising with police and the Departments of Education and Social Welfare, and visiting learners' homes. This would help Life Orientation teachers to mind their classes, reducing their burdens and enabling them to concentrate on their school work.

Another finding of this paper is that there are no established monitoring systems in two of the selected high schools in the Fort Beaufort District. The Life Orientation teachers in these schools stated that there is no monitoring, and that the principals' monitoring is based on their trust of the teacher's capacity. To a certain extent, Life Orientation is being marginalised by the very people who are given the responsibility of making sure that this curriculum is fully implemented. It is the direct responsibility of the principals and the District Officers that teaching and learning take place in schools (Sayed 2004; Christiaans 2006; Prinsloo 2007).

However, in the other schools, it was found that some kind of monitoring strategies were indeed put in place for the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. It was stated that monitoring is done in Life Orientation, as in all other learning areas, through the head of departments (HODS) and subject heads. It was revealed that in these schools Life Orientation activities are monitored once a term. The subject head collects Life Orientation teachers' files and passes them to the HOD, who in turn passes them to the principal. It was indicated that sometimes class visits are done and examination papers are reviewed to ensure quality.

The findings on how the Department of Education does go about monitoring the teaching of Life Orientation were found to be course moderation and examining teachers' and learners' portfolios. Some of the participant teachers and principals stated that the monitoring mechanism was beneficial because it helped teachers to work harder and faster to finish their work schedule so that they were not left behind by other Life Orientation teachers in their clusters.

Nevertheless, the other participants stated that these monitoring mechanisms were not beneficial as the district officials did not visit schools often, since the SADTU did not allow class visits. This is regrettable, since it emerged that some Life Orientation teachers "cooked up" marks for learners for the purpose of satisfying course moderation requirements. One of the Life Orientation teachers stated that there had not been any monitoring from the Department of Education for the past three years that she had been teaching Life Orientation; in that time, the subject advisor had never visited her.

The Department of Education officials and school principals are supposed to visit schools and classes to monitor how Life Orientation is being implemented (Sayed 2004). In most of the selected schools in the Fort Beaufort District, this appears *not* to be the case. The principal has a great task to monitor all the school's systems, from distribution of resources and their use, to monitoring itself (Lupton 2005). Panday (2007) accepts that Life Orientation implementation has to be monitored and supported; that is, it has to be supervised by principals and department officials or inspectors. She acknowledges that the word "supervision" is closely related to curriculum implementation. According to Panday (2007), it is not only the manner of teaching

which needs to be monitored, but also the content that is actually being addressed which has to be supervised as well.

Hellinger (2003) shares the same view as Sigilai and Bett (2013) when he postulates that monitoring involves principals looking at teachers' weekly plans and learning objectives, and the plans teachers are working towards. These include examining samples of learners' work, visiting classrooms, observing the implementation of teaching, learning and curricula policies, reviewing learners' assessment information and evaluating learners, class and school levels of performance and progress. Zepeda (2006) affirms that teaching is the primary work of teachers, and it should be the centre for in-class assessment of teaching and learning for teachers and learners. This is important for schools if the curriculum is to be implemented according to its objectives.

CONCLUSION

This paper revealed that the majority of the teachers agreed that the support they received from their principals was adequate. The support mechanisms from the district officials were indicated to be in form of funds, advice, materials, information, workshops and training, and course moderation.

However, the majority of the participants stated that the support from the Department of Education was not adequate because the Department's subject advisors did not visit Life Orientation classes for supervision frequently enough to be in touch with the practical realities of Life Orientation curriculum implementation, or to assess the situation on the ground and support the teachers. In some cases, principals were also found to be wanting in the area of support in the form of actual class visitation.

Some of the teachers seemed to contradict themselves in saying that they received adequate support from their principals, only to say, later in the interview, that the principals did not support and monitor the classroom teaching of Life Orientation. These teachers appeared to be covering up for their principals, while they were ready to point accusing fingers at the department officials for the inadequacy of their support and monitoring in Life Orientation. It appeared that department officials and some school principals alike were themselves not taking Life

Orientation seriously by giving Life Orientation a low status among the other learning areas.

Interviews with the principals revealed that in some cases they did not monitor the teaching of Life Orientation, either because the school was small and understaffed, or because of the trust the principal had in the Life Orientation teacher. The Departmental expectation is that monitoring should be done once per term. Even this frequency appeared to be inadequate for inexperienced and untrained Life Orientation teachers, who need consistent monitoring and support because of the challenges they face.

The methods used by department officials to monitor the implementation of Life Orientation were given as course moderation meetings (often in clusters of schools), examining teachers and learners' portfolios, and, when they happen, school visits. Some of the participants agreed that the monitoring strategies were beneficial, while others disagreed that they were not because they were not employed often enough. It may be argued from the information gathered that many of the schools in this paper lack adequate monitoring and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these findings, it is recommended that department officials, subject advisors and school principals should monitor and support the Life Orientation activities in schools to observe firsthand the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. In addition, visits to schools should be regular, as this alone would help with monitoring and supporting the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers should furthermore be given written feedback to help them reflect on their areas of strengths and weaknesses. Finally, class visits should be encouraged to allow the monitoring and support that is needed by teachers.

REFERENCES

- Adams A, Cox AL 2008. Questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups. In: Paul Cairns, Anna L Cox (Eds.): *Research Methods for Human Computer Interaction*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 17-34.
- Christiaans DJ 2006. *Empowering Teachers to Implement the Life Orientation Learning Area in the Senior Phase of the General Education and Training Band*. MEd Thesis, Unpublished. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.
- Coleman M, Earley P 2005. *Leadership and Management in Education: Cultures, Change and Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Creswell JW 2007. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Denscombe M 2001. *The Good Research Guide for Small Scale Social Projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Ertmer PA 2005 Teacher pedagogical beliefs: The final frontier in our quest for technology integration? *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 53(4): 25-39.
- Everard KB, Morris G, Wilson I 2004. *Effective School Management*. 4th Edition. London: Sage Publications.
- Galton M, MacBeath J 2008. *Teachers Under Pressure*. London: Sage.
- Hellinger P 2003. Leading educational change: Reflection on the practice of structural and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33: 3.
- Hoy HK, Mishel CG, 2005. *Educational Administration Theory, Research Practice*. New York: Macmillan.
- John Kuada 2012. *Research Methodology: A Project Guide for University Students*. Denmark: Samfundslitteratur.
- Karsten S, Voncken E, Voorthuis M 2000. Dutch primary schools and the concept of the learning organization. *The Learning Organization*, 7(3): 145-155.
- Lupton R 2005. Social justice and school improvement: Improving the quality of schooling in the poorest neighbourhoods. *British Educational Research Journal*, 31(5): 589-604.
- McLaughlin M 2014. Implementation as mutual adaptation: Change in classroom organization. In: W Williams, R Elmore (Ed.): *Social Program Implementation*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 167-180.
- Njelesani DL 2012. *Implementing Preventive Education about HIV/AIDS through Physical Education in Zambia: The Response of Teachers*. Doctoral Dissertation. Ontario: University of Toronto.
- Ornstein CA, Hunkins PF 2004. *Curriculum: Foundations, Principles and Issues*. 4th Edition. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- Panday D 2007. *Teachers' Perspectives on the Implementation of Life Orientation as a Learning Area*. An Article Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for Degree of Magister Education (Curriculum Policy, Development and Management). Port Elizabeth, South Africa: Faculty of Education Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.
- Prinsloo E 2007. Implementation of Life Orientation programmes in the new curriculum in South African schools: Perceptions of principals and Life Orientation teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(1): 155-170.
- Rogan JM, Grayson DJ 2003. Towards a theory of curriculum implementation with particular reference to science education in developing countries. *International Journal of Curriculum Studies* (In Press). Retrieved from URL. [online] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950069010145819>.
- Rooth E 2005. *An Investigation of the Status and Practice of Life Orientation in South African Schools*.

- PhD Thesis, Unpublished. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.
- Sayed Y 2004. The case of teacher education in post-apartheid South Africa: politics and priorities. In: L Chisholm (Ed.): *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, pp. 247 - 265.
- Sigilai RM, Bett JC 2013. Effectiveness of head teachers' leadership styles on the management of public primary school curriculum implementations in Bomet County, Kenya. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 4(2): 375-382.
- Tiendrebéogo G, Meijer S, Engelberg G 2003. *Africa Consultants International Technical Paper No.119*. Africa: SD Publication Series.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2004. *The Condition of Education 2004 (NCES 2004-077)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Van Deventer K 2009. Perspectives of teachers on the implementation of Life Orientation in grades R-11 from selected Western Cape schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 29: 127.
- Van der Walt JL, De Klerk J 2006. Die effektiwiteit van die Lewensoriënteringsprogram volgens 'n groep Suid-Afrikaanse onderwysers—ruimte vir verbetering? *Tydskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 42: 175-193.
- Zepeda A 2006. Classroom-based assessment of teaching and learning. In: JH Stronge (Ed.): *Evaluating Teaching: A Guide to Current Thinking and Best Practice*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, pp.101-124.