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Stakeholders' Support for Large Scale Assessment in Schools: A Case of Annual National Assessment (ANA) in South African Schools

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Abstract

Assessment is a crucial aspect of teaching and learning; it includes various means of assessing what learners could reproduce as product of learning. Annual National Assessment (ANA) is a large scale assessment with the sole aim of measuring learners' achievement, growth and progress. Since the introduction and implementation of ANA in 2010, the analysis of the results from 2011 to 2014 has shown very little improvement in learner performance. This qualitative study sought to ascertain how stakeholders supported standardised testing to overcome its limitations, and can be used to improve teaching and learning in South African schools. The theoretical framework that underpins this study is the Hard Accountability Model. Themes were generated from the collected data from ten English teachers, ten Mathematics and ten Heads of Departments from ten grade six primary schools in King Cethswayo district, Kwa-Zulu Natal Province of South Africa. Findings revealed that stakeholders did not support adequately ANA to fulfil its purpose in schools. The study also indicated inadequate teacher development programmes to regularly capacitate teachers on how to improve ANA results. The study therefore recommended that the Department of Basic Education should ensure that teacher developmental programmes are conducted while curriculum advisors and School Management Teams should strengthen their supervision and monitoring in schools.

Keywords: Annual national assessment; Large scale assessment; Standardised tests; Support; Stakeholders.

1. Introduction

Assessment is highly significant to teaching and learning, it is an important part of the education system. The use of standardised testing as one of the assessment tools is common practice in education system especially in developed countries such as United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and host of others developed countries. The main focus of the standardised testing from inception of the tool had been to measure and determine the competency of learners in the experienced teaching and learning activities, with achievements, growth and progress as key indicators (Mons, 2009). The main aim of standardised testing today has changed from being used as leverage scale to assess the learners but to discriminate learners on the basis of intelligence, but also socio-economic status, wealth, and privilege (Holmes, 2009). Haney (2000); Hanushek and Raymond (2003); and House of Commons (2007) argue that earlier in the 21st century, through the combination of the design, administration and marking of the harmonised examinations, standardised testing has resulted into a lot of scientific and media discourse.

The reason for debate about the instrument is because of its usage as a key instrument of policy reform in education systems. The tool has gone beyond a mere tool for measuring learners' achievement but a new political status that significantly has become a core education system management tool. Standardised testing is now at the intersection of new trends that have been shaping educational policies of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (OECD) since the 1980s (Mons, 2007). Seemingly, Guskey and Jung (2013) view that learners are being influenced by standardised testing, based on social beliefs for educational accountability and achievement; therefore, it was embraced across districts and nations. However, the significance of this tool has been a controversial debate among teachers, academics, and politicians due to universal acceptance and usage. ANA is premised on the principle that effective testing will afford learners the opportunity to demonstrate relevant skills and understanding and assist the education system in diagnosing learners' shortcomings. Nevertheless, its effectiveness in testing learners can provide valuable feedback to schools, teachers, learners and parents. Furthermore, they provide some standardised indication of learning at the primary grades for early identification and remediation of learning deficits (Spaull, 2011).

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These aimed at improving the language and mathematics skills of learners, thereby establishing their level of learning attainments. Department of Basic Education (2012a), reports the implementation of the Annual National Assessment in South African primary schools for the first time in February 2011, and subsequently conducted in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Spaull (2013b), contends that while these tests are especially important in improving the quality of education in South Africa, their current implementation and lack of external verification have reduced much of their value. The quality of Mathematics and English in all spheres of primary education in South Africa has been generally disappointing and criticised compared with their peers in other countries (Department of Basic Education, 2014; Graven, 2014; Umameh, 2011). Large share of the budget has been spent globally on education sector by various states and governments and yielded results are minimal (Asikhia, 2010).

Seemingly, Spaull (2013b) declares that South African government has spent so much money in providing schools with resources, but some schools still lack adequate resources to function (Spaull, 2013b). It is pertinent to note that schools deserve adequate support from the stakeholders for preparation of learners in alignment with state standards and requirements of the Annual National Assessments. The paucity of extant literature on stakeholders' support for standardised testing system motivates this study. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the stakeholders' support for ANA on teaching and learning in primary schools in King Cetshwayo district, KwaZulu-Natal. It sought to put forward various recommendations that might help to inform specific actions to be taken to effectively and efficiently implement ANA.

2. Theoretical Framework

Hard Accountability Model has been used as the theoretical framework to underpin this study**.** The theory was derived from series of standardised testing from American and English schools. The theory had been used to do analysis of potential impact of assessment tests on teaching and learning in education system. Goodwin *et al.* (2002); Hanushek and Raymond (2003); McDonnell (2005); Haertel and Herman (2005); Phelps (2005) and Woessmann (2007) report that the model employ penalties and rewards to assessment tests which evaluate the effort of teachers, learners and the schools as a whole. This implies that performing schools get funded, successful learners get qualifications or progress to next phase of the education system, while the poor learners are made to repeat the phase or denied progression. This model is driven by some significant mechanisms, triggered by the tests and work together to improve the effectiveness of the education system. Hard accountability promotes increase in learners' workload for better performance based on set goals. The learners are motivated by their academic targets while the teachers are inspired to give priority to subject-contents that can enhance learners' attainment in large scale standardised testing.

Hard accountability model ensures that learners' possibility of repeating academic year and obtaining exemptions in the next grade is determined by the standardised test results. Standardised testing encourages learners to be driven by their own extrinsic motivation to study hard for learning attainments. Teachers are held accountable to the learners' achievements by their line managers and by civil society through the publication of the school's results, and will therefore work harder to ensure that learners succeed, strive to improve their professional skills through training and discussions with colleagues.

The hard accountability model is based on a set of assumptions (Linn, 2000; Nichols, 2007). The underlying assumptions are:

i. The quality of teaching and learning available to learners ' acquisition of skills and knowledge is determined by assessment tests;
ii. The measurement is not influenced by learners' individual differences in motivation, language skills, social status or ethnicity;
iii. The use of reinforcements such as rewards and penalties by the teachers and external perceptions of their work by parents and general public motivate the teachers and improve their classroom practices;
iv. Learners' test results can be used by teachers to improve teaching and learning pedagogies;
v. Assessment can be used to educational teachers to enhance school management by the management teams;
vi. Learners' educational achievements are directly determined by the Schools;
vii. Parents understand the significance of the tests and are able to interpret learners' results and that of the school as a whole.
viii. Assessment results are also used as indices for performing schools, thereby improving the education system as a whole.

It is observed that ANA as standardised testing, impact policy making in education system; it frames policies on school autonomy, decentralisation and school choice policy, and also defines clearly stakeholders' responsibilities extensively. Therefore, Standardised testing (ANA) creates much concerns for different stakeholders on the influence of ANA on teaching and learning in schools. ANA does not only act as instrument of assessment for teachers' classroom performance but also assess learners' performances in South African primary schools. Pertinently, ANA results can be used to ascertain strength and weakness of teaching and learning in South African primary schools.

3. Empirical Studies on Standardised Testing

South Africa attainment of independence in 1994 propelled free and compulsory basic education to improve and make education accessible to all citizens. Free and basic education was made compulsory to all school ages in every part of South African community as right to equal education (Department of Basic Education, 2012c). This is to

equip the school age citizens with knowledge and skills that can make them responsive and liberal citizens. To ensure quality education that will propel development of individuals and the country at large, several national curriculum policies were introduced to reform and address imbalances in education system. Seemingly, (Department of Basic Education, 2012c) indicates that the main goal of education is to make learners literate citizens who are capable of competing nationally and internationally with their contemporaries. Therefore, the curriculum has been reviewed at different times to accommodate the goals/visions of the policy makers for enhanced learners who can fit in into the multi-faced contexts. These curriculum reforms include Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and presently in use- Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS); all aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past and to improve the quality of education in South Africa.

Across the globe, large fund is allocated to increase the frequency of standardised testing as well as to improve learners' performance in the large scale testing; findings still argue the competency of large scale standardised testing as basis for measuring learners' academic performance in real sense (Bergmann, 2014). Seemingly Morris (2011) in his study identifies four reasons among several for increased usage of large scale standardised testing as assessment tool; (a) an upsurge in the practice of standards-based assessment (b) enlarged international competition, as dignified and described by the Programme for International Learner Assessment (PISA) and also the Trends in International Mathematics and Sciences Study (TIMSS); (c) an amplified emphasis on a precise subject matter, needed as 21st century skills; and lastly (d) force wielded on school systems for efficiency.

Interestingly, a study by Kanjee (2013), asserts that the features of large scale national assessment must identify significance of learners as key stakeholders in in education system and their improvement in academic performance through quality classroom teaching should be the basis of assessment. Similarly, Abu-Alhija (2007) in his study argues that the main focus of any large scale assessment is on holistic enhancement of educational outcomes or goals; which can be: 1) for clear accountability; 2) for efficient control of quality in education system; 3) for provision of comprehensive diagnosis of instructional tasks; and 4) for identification of educational needs and effective allocation of limited resources. National assessments can be used to improve classroom practices by using the learners' performance to address the needs of teaching and learning for enhanced learners' performance Popham (2011). National assessment results can be used as diagnostic tools to evaluate teaching and learning in education system, thereby addressing classroom needs of teachers for better performance.

In a study conducted by Van der Berg and Shepherd (2010), the researchers assert that regular administration of large scale assessment such as the Annual National Assessments (ANA) improves academic results within the schools and enhance teaching and learning as well. However, Van der Berg and Shepherd (2010) decry that most continuous assessment tools in South African cannot be relied upon for academic differences in individual learners' abilities. Learners in these schools are disenchanted concerning their readiness for the national matric examination. Consequently, continuous assessments need to be strengthened to afford learners to improve their performance in external examinations.

3.1. School Leadership and Management

It is the responsibility of the school management for effective leadership styles, as this is significant to quality education system (Kurian, 2008). Effectiveness of the leadership styles can also promote learners' academic performance generally. Seemingly, Sharples *et al.* (2011) indicate that there is need for strong visionary leadership to enhance learners' performance through effective management of all limited school resources. It is therefore imperative for ANA to be effectively implemented in schools, efficiency of school leaders and managers cannot be compromised. The quality of school leaders determines the success of schools most especially academic performance of learners in both internal and external academic assessments. School leaders' administrative skills can expressively promote schools' academic performance through effective management of available human and material resources in the schools. Changes in leadership structured could be initiated when necessary for meaningful and improved decision-making by the teachers and the school community Taylor (2011). There is therefore, dire need for a functional leadership system that can ensure efficient transitions of ANA standardised testing from pre-administration to post administration of ANA in schools. Effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning activities should be done regularly by the school SMT to support where necessary for improved learners' performance.

It is the role of the principals to ensure quality delivery of lessons in the school, the principal must ensure effectiveness in curriculum coverage and quality teaching as instructional leaders in the school. In a study conducted by Hoadley *et al.* (2009), it is informed that the most principals in South African schools disregard oversight of curriculum and teaching as their focal duty, but subject heads' and HODs' responsibilities. Principals need to collaboratively support the HoDs to make sure teachers attain curriculum coverage. It is therefore a wrong notion that the HODs are the only ones to ensure teachers' curriculum coverage; and perception that the principals should focus on administrative duties and learner discipline is hoarse (Hoadley *et al.*, 2009).

In another qualitative study conducted by Baloyi (2016) on post intervention strategies of Annual National Assessment for Grade 6 learners in Limpopo province, 4 teachers, 4 HODs and 4 principals were interviewed; his findings declared lack of poor supervision and monitoring by School Management Team as responsible for poor learners' performance in ANA. Participants of Baloyi (2016) highlighted that the SMTs lack adequate knowledge on what strategies could be used to efficiently drive curriculum policy in schools and how teaching and learning can excel. It can be deduced that this is a great challenge to successful implementation of ANA, therefore there will be need to empower the SMTs on strategies for curriculum monitoring and control to improve learners' performance in ANA.

The Department of Education (DBE) should emphasise the need for the SMTs to draft policies and strategies that cater for peculiar problems of teaching and learning activities in different schools. Managers also need support and cooperation of the community and other stakeholders for enhancement of teaching and learning to achieve quality education. Every member of the SMTs must be functional to ensure discipline and commitment on the part of learners and teachers to provide effective curriculum delivery (Kurian, 2008). This is made possible through operative monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning activities.

Conclusively, it can be deduced from studies (Baloyi, 2016; Hoadley *et al.*, 2009; Kurian, 2008; Taylor, 2011) that the Sschool Management Teams must support teaching and learning by providing necessary textbooks, stationeries, other teaching materials as well pedagogical tools; and importantly ensure that resources are effectively utilized. Principals must ensure quality content knowledge as professional approach amongst the staff as the instructional leaders.

3.2. Parental Support

It is imperative that parents and guardians are integrated into school system to gain trust of learners. Research have proven that learners whose parents or guardians are integrated into school system tend to be academically and socially better than those whose parents are not (Mestry *et al.*, 2007). Mestry *et al.* (2007), in their study, argue that academic performance of learners can be enhanced if parents are regularly involved in the education system through their active collaborations with the schools on learners' academic and social activities. Seemingly, Kurian (2008) supports that parents need to be active in educational activities of their children so as to encourage the learners to perform better. Adequate and regular communication with parents, as well as their prompt response and support to teaching and learning will ensure positive habits, behaviours and attitude that enhance learners' academic and social performance.

Furthermore, Kurian (2008) proposes effective strategies to integrate parents into school system; which include: holding regular parents' meetings to engage parents in supporting their children, this enables shared vision and cooperation among the stakeholders; use of Short Message Service (SMS) system to update parents about learners' attendance and other educational matters relating to their children at the school should be of substantial prominence. The establishment of strong Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to expedite communication between schools and parents should be designed. The school can customise feedback from parents to augment educational environment in the school. Nevertheless, this is not adequately embraced in South African schools.

The DBE with the support of school management and community initiatives should partner with the parents on how they can be effectively integrated into school system to enhance learners' academic performance. Other stakeholders such as Non-Government Organisations (NGO), Teacher Unions and the organised unemployed youths can be used to intimate parents and guardians into School Governing Bodies that can all be accountable to quality education system. Volunteers from unemployed educated youths can be used to teach learners after school hours daily and on weekend days to assist the learners. According to Baloyi (2016), schools fail most times because parents are not adequately and regularly involved or integrated to school system to support schools in teaching and learning.

Parents expect large scale testing to positively impact the learners, this is why much is always expected from schools without considering their own impact in supporting schools to function effectively. Limited studies have been done in developing countries such as South Africa on perception of parents on large scale standardised testing like ANA (Baloyi, 2016). Contrastingly, discussion had evolved around the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) on which large testing assessment is built in the United States of America, parents have engaged the school system on its latest amendment, stimulating several investigations that resulted in objectively reliable results. Considerably, massive parental involvement, support and commitment have been recorded in schools to support standards and testing. In a related study conducted in the United States by Farkas *et al.* (2003), it was reported that 82% of parents agreed that guidelines on teaching and learning in school system should be clearly made available to them to enhance learners' academic performance in large scale assessments.

Therefore, it could be deduced that adequate involvement of parents and guardians in school system will enhance learners' performance and also speed up school development. Performance of learners are clearly analysed and reported to parents on ANA, the results allow the parents to understand how the learners can be supported for better performance as major stakeholders to collaborate with the school system.

3.3. Role of Teachers' Unions in Quality Education

Teachers' unions are prominent stakeholders whose impact can improve education system. The teachers' unions are members of education authorities that significantly contribute to the success of ANA in schools. As education authorities that can vigorously inspire teachers to be more intrinsically empowered for quality education. Teachers' unions in Uruguay were involved in the design of large scale standardised assessment system (Ravela, 2005). On the other hand, Van der Berg *et al.* (2012) highlight that journals could be sponsored to encourage research on ANA or Institute to carry out regular studies to empower senior members of the unions to support the teachers on ANA. These can motivate the teachers on enhancement of learners' academic performance in ANA.

Additionally, professional development of teachers by their unions assist the teachers in preparation of their learners for large scale assessments, the unions understand and know what to design as professional development programmes that can effectively impact classroom practices of the teachers and also enhance learners' academic performance. The unions can also propose policies that can promote teachers' instructional task delivery beyond salary increments.

Teachers' unions have been found to have assisted in proposing policies and programmes that enhance learners' performance at different large scale assessments, the unions have instituted initiatives that support quality education (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2012). DBE should encourage stakeholders on the momentous interventions for enhanced learners' performance in ANA.

3.4. Quality Teaching and Learning

The focal drive of the ANA is to advance quality teaching and learning as commissioned by the Quality, Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC), launched in 2008 by the government and teachers' unions. The campaign charge individuals and organisations to be accountable to quality education. The campaign was to create awareness to the citizens on the significance of education and their accountabilities and obligations towards education; encourage communities to support schools, teachers and learners; expand the quality education for all learners, particularly the underprivileged, and to establish improved quality education via enhanced learners' academic performance.

Campaign was also to alert and impact ANA improve teaching and learning, quality learning and teaching demand functional responsibilities that can enhance classroom practices, responsiveness and respect for learners. The learners were expected to be regular and prompt in classrooms, attentive and committed to learning, respect for teachers and fellow learners, attend to their homework Zuma (2011).

All stakeholders have obligations to education system, hard accountability ensures accountabilities on the part of every stakeholder on how they support ANA. Several factors influence quality, learning and teaching outside the school contexts. These include, learners' socio economic backgrounds, lack of adequate and regular teaching materials and prominently, dearth of parental involvement. Shalem (2011), concurs to erroneous blame apportioned to teachers on poor performance of learners in academic performance without any reference to other major influencing factors like learners' intellectual development, family socio-economic trap, teachers' subject-content knowledge and classroom pedagogy, poor remuneration of teachers, and frequent change in subject curriculum.

Assessment of the QLTC since inception indicates that the objectives have not been fully achieved. Rather, it has been used to determine the success of ANA with reference to stakeholders' support to its administration. Majority of the rural schools could not get needed interventions from the QLTC due to their rural locations. Stakeholders in the rural based schools; stakeholders such as parents, learners, teachers, school managers or leaders are not clearly and adequately informed about the purpose of QLTC on ANA (Shalem, 2011). Therefore, for the QLTC to accomplish its goals, DBE need to create much and necessary massive awareness on the purpose of QLTC at various school levels, focusing on accountable responsibilities of teachers, parents, learners and the communities at large. This is when the stakeholders can be used to achieve the vison of QLTC on improvement of learners' academic performance in ANA. Each stakeholder should be accountable to his roles in the anticipated groundworks/results of ANA afore and afterwards its administrations.

4. Research Methodology

This interpretive study adopted qualitative approach in its research design. King Cetshwayo district, one of the eleven district municipalities within KwaZulu-Natal was used as the study area. Purposive sampling was used to select thirty (30) participants, these were ten (10) grade 6 English teachers, ten (10) Mathematics teachers and ten (10) HoDs for the phase from ten primary schools within the Mthunzini Circuit, one of the five Circuits in the district. Permissions were obtained from the district Department of Education and the principals for the study. The data instruments for this study were Semi-structured interview guides for teachers and focus group interview guides for the heads of departments.

5. Data Analysis and Presentation

Data collected from participants was coded and analysed and interpreted according to the themes generated from both the semi-structured and focus group interviews. A qualitative approach was used in the analysis and interpretation of interview data. Where necessary, the verbatim expressions of the participants were used within the thematic context of the discussion. The researcher considered the field notes, reduced the audio recording into transcripts and judiciously read them. Similar ideas or responses to the questions posed to the participants were translated into specific categories for the purposes of analysis (Cohen *et al.*, 2010). This exercise is described by Cohen *et al.* (2010) as coding which permits the researcher to consolidate large amount of text and to ascertain patterns that would be challenging to identify by just listening to an audio or reading a transcript.

6. Discussion of Findings

6.1. Inadequate Support and Knowledge from Curriculum Specialists

Findings indicate the dearth of support from curriculum specialists in English and Mathematics to adequately support improvement in teaching and learning in schools. Teachers were of the opinions that lack of support from English and Mathematics specialists influence academic performance of learners in Annual National Assessments (ANA) in English and Mathematics. Teachers highlighted shortage of subject specialists in English and Mathematics, and lack of necessary support that can constructively assist learners to perform better in ANA. One teacher commented:

> *"Shortage of English subject specialists is another challenge that causes poor performance in ANA, because it is difficult for us in our school to get assistance when we need curriculum support due to lack of visit and support of curriculum specialists." (English Teacher 2)*

It was emphasized that curriculum advisors were not regularly visiting schools to support and provide knowledge for classroom practices of the teachers towards ANA. This was revealed by one teacher:

> *"Since the introduction of ANA I have not seen any curriculum advisor to come and give me support as how to improve my learners' performance. My school is always performing poor in ANA because of lack of knowledge and support." (English Teacher 4)*

Seemingly, Mathematics teachers viewed that curriculum specialists or subject-advisors never visited schools regularly as expected by teachers to give support in schools. One teacher commented:

> *"I think subject advisors should visit us regularly to improve our content knowledge, because lack of content knowledge and lack of support from curriculum advisors or subject specialists among others, are some of the constraints for the effective use of ANA to improve teaching and learning Mathematics." (Mathematics Teacher 1)*

Another teacher responded:

> *"Subject advisors do not play their role for ensuring the functionality of teaching and learning in the schools. Such weakness and poor visit to give lead to learner poor performance especially in critical subject such as English and Mathematics." (Mathematics Teacher 4)*

Similar findings were established by the HoDs who emphasized two precarious issues concerning English and Mathematics curriculum advisors on capacitation of HoDs and the teachers with extensive content knowledge, classroom pedagogies and support to improve learners' performance in ANA results.

One HoD observed:

> *"It happens that I know only one subject advisor for English and one for Mathematics for primary schools, yet there are many primary schools in my district in particular. These two subject advisors have to service all these primary schools. Therefore, shortage of curriculum advisors in English and Mathematics to give knowledge and support in schools is another constraint for the effective use of ANA to improve learner performance." (HoD1)*

It is believed by the teachers that there is need curriculum advisors to support teachers in teaching and learning of English and Mathematics to improve performance of schools in ANA results. This another HoD argued:

> *"Content knowledge and support by curriculum advisors regarding improving performance of English and Mathematics ANA in schools should be seriously taken into consideration. Teachers should not find themselves wanting as how to get support and knowledge to improve learners' performance if ANA results have to improve." (HoD 8)*

Statutorily, the Department of Education (2010) assigns and expects curriculum advisors to regularly visit schools for monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation in different subjects and to provide needed teaching and learning materials that can improve learners' performance in the subjects. Conversely, English and Mathematics curriculum advisors are very few in number, and cannot adequately and regularly visit schools for proper support. According to De Clercq (2008), adequate support to teachers towards curriculum delivery enhances learners' and schools' performance.

Both Teachers and HoDs conclusively agreed that regular and adequate visit by the curriculum advisors to schools offer support and content knowledge in English and Mathematics improve learners' academic performance in ANA results. They identified shortage of curriculum advisors as a challenge to classroom practices of teachers and consequently, learners' academic performance. They both advised that the Department of Basic Education should expand the number of curriculum advisors to enhance learners' academic performance in English and Mathematics.

6.2. Instructional Leadership by the School Management Team

Findings revealed lack of functional instructional leadership roles by the School Management Team members in schools to provide necessary tasks and resources that can enhance learners' performance in English and Mathematics. The participants specified that instructional leadership roles of the principals and HoDs in schools are to improve learners' performance. It was believed that the School Management Team members should be accountable and functionally responsible for learners' academic success by providing necessary support, guidance and appropriate learning materials to teachers and learners. However, teachers criticized School Management Teams inability to take active role providing necessary support, guidance and sufficient teaching and learning materials to schools for ANA. One teacher observed that:

> *"I think that the School Management Team needs to guide and support teachers concerning English and Mathematics ANA preparation by ensuring that learning support materials are supplied in time at school. They must ensure that all learners have workbooks and those workbooks are utilised for effective teaching and learning to improve learner performance." (English Teacher 2)*

Teachers also identified ANA's preparation and administration should be taken serious by the subject teachers in collaboration with the SMTs and should not be left all alone to the teachers. One of the teachers retorted:

> *"To be honest with me regarding the preparation of ANA in my teaching and learning I did not get any support from my principal and my HoD. When it was time for ANA preparation and writing I was on my own looking for information from neighboring schools on how to prepare my learners." (English Teacher 7)*

Seemingly, it was also concurred by Mathematics teachers that teachers did not get adequate and regular support from their SMTs on preparations of their learners for ANA. They specified that the role of the SMT in schools should entail management of all the school activities. The SMTs are representatives of the DoE in the school, therefore they should adequately support the teachers in preparations of their learners for ANA to improve learners' performance in English and Mathematics. One teacher stated that:

> *"Principals and HoDs need to support us as teachers by ensuring that learning support materials are supplied on time at school. They must ensure that all learners have relevant workbooks to prepare for themselves. Although in some many instances it is not always the case." (Mathematics Teacher 1)*

Seemingly, another teacher retorted:

> *"Lack of support regarding ANA preparations and administration made me to be reluctant even to go to the classroom for ANA preparation. My HoD did not ensure that she was in possession of all required policy documents regarding the preparation and administration of ANA to help me to improve learner performance. Most of the time I had to find myself wanting." (Mathematics Teacher 3)*

Similarly, another teacher supported by pointing out the importance of the collaboration between the S

Same findings were shown by the HoDs about the implication of instructional leadership role of School Management Team members on how learners' academic performance can be improved in ANA. They advised that the SMTs should provide necessary professional development programmes for teachers and that school based intervention strategies can be initiated to support struggling learners to improve, while learners should be encouraged for enhanced performance in general education curriculum. One of the HoDs responded:

> *"SMT needs to support teachers and must make sure that a school English and Mathematics plan are developed and ensure that all aspects of intervention strategies are implemented at the school level and with the parent community to improve learner performance." (HoD 2)*

Another HoD emphasized the need for teachers to attend on regular basis, professional development programmes:

> *"I think that the SMT should identify appropriate teachers to attend the training programmes. They should also provide opportunities for team teaching at school level, create the environment for class support and set school targets for learner performance". (HoD 5)*

One HoD indicated that teachers need to be aware of required policies that can enhance classroom practices:

> *"The SMT should ensure that all teachers in their departments are in possession of all required policy documents." (HoD7)*

Similar views were indicated by the HoDs that regular class visits are needed to support and not to find fault in teachers: One HoD stressed:

> *"HoDs must ensure that the teachers are teaching according to the Annual Teaching Plans and the correct work standard is maintained. They need to check if teachers have enough resources and if there is a shortage they need to provide." (HoD 9)*

Teachers and HoDs alleged that the performance of learners in English and Mathematics in ANA are influenced by the available instructional management in the schools. They specified the need for responsibility and accountability of stakeholders to manage effectively the curriculum delivery in schools. They therefore, must collaboratively work to have knowledge of all aspects of instructional activities within the school contexts. Moreover, SMT should be able to offer comprehensive opportunities for the teachers and HoDs, by consolidating classroom practices with suitable materials on preparation of teachers and learners for ANA. Teachers and HoDs highlighted the significance of regular meetings with SMTs on curriculum issues, detailed questions around subject content and improvement on classroom pedagogies.

The School Management Team members are the change agents, they are accountable for curriculum and instructional activities in the school system (Turney, 2010). Gandeebo (2007), opines that the SMTs in schools should collaborate with teachers in accomplishing their instructional leadership responsibilities; so as to enhance quality curriculum delivery in schools. Instructional leadership practices make a significant influence to the accomplishment of the schools' or learners' achievement (Gandeebo, 2007). Consequently, the SMT should make sure that the Department of Basic Education provides schools with ANA exemplars and support materials on the assessment guidelines and Annual Teaching Programmes. Monitoring should be done to ensure effective usage of all resources to improve learners' academic performance in English and Mathematics. Stringent monitoring should be designed to ensure effective teaching of the right subject-content and assessments of all taxonomy levels to prepare all learners for ANA testing.

6.3. In-service professional development to improve ANA results

Improvement on learners' performance in English and Mathematics depends largely on teachers' professional competencies on maximising the available resources for teaching and learning. Teachers indicated that regular professional development programmes could enhance classroom practices (Ajani, 2019). Professional development of teachers includes all activities that could be used to improve classroom practices of teachers, for enhancement of learners' academic performance (Ajani and Govender, 2018). Teachers agreed that not all workshops they have attended were subject based, the teachers agreed that workshops that focus on the subjects will be much appreciated. Lack of regular in-service training limits teachers on solving English and Mathematical problems related to learner's

performance. They believe that regular in-service development that is subject-content based in-service programmes can significantly impact their teaching and learning. One teacher commented:

> *"Among the challenges that we have regarding ANA is that there are no regular content workshops to enrich our knowledge when preparing for ANA and also after administering it so as to improve learner performance. Therefore, more content workshops on how to improve learner performance are essential if learner results in ANA are to improve." (English teacher 2)*

There is a need for quality in-service programmes to empower teachers with in-depth knowledge and pedagogies in English and Mathematics, conversely it seems that a key limitation is the capability of the circuit or district to offer teachers with the regular and adequate training they need. One teacher had this to say:

> *"In a year I only attended one workshop addressing the challenges of English that was arranged by the Department and book publishers. The theme was not about how to improve ANA results and what assistance do we need to improve ANA results. I feel we need regular workshops to enhance our knowledge regarding learner performance." (English teacher 4)*

Mathematics teachers oppose that quality teaching is significant to enhanced educational performance of learners in this subject, nevertheless there are no satisfactory in-service programmes designed by the circuit or district to empower teachers with extensive and in-depth content knowledge. This was described by one teacher:

> *"A combination of deep subject knowledge and pedagogical skills is required to promote effective teaching and learning in English and Mathematics. Therefore, more content workshops are essential so as to be well equipped with knowledge." (Mathematics Teacher 2)*

Teachers criticized the inability of the available in-service professional development programmes that do not take the classroom needs and professional concerns of teachers into account and no adequate follow-up support provided (Ajani, 2019). Participation of teachers in in-service training should be encouraged to forestall low number of teachers attending training: One teacher responded:

> *"I only attended a workshop once where they prepare us about the administration of ANA and after that we met as Mathematics teachers to discuss and come up with innovative ways that will support each other to improve learner performance (like morning and afternoon classes)." (Mathematics teacher 3)*

Another teacher remarked that:

> *"Teachers with profound Mathematics content knowledge are able to use suitable teaching strategies for Mathematics to enhance learners' performance in the classroom." (Mathematics teacher 4)*

Most of the patriating HoDs indicated that teachers are willing to improve ANA results but they lack knowledge due to insufficient in-service programmes. Teachers should be motivated to attend workshops organised by subject advisors and to acquire additional academic qualifications in English and Mathematics. One HoD commented:

> *"The Department of Basic Education needs to embark on profound in-service training programmme of English and Mathematics teachers to equip them with skills and knowledge for teaching English and Mathematics." (HoD 1)*

HoDs highlighted that Mathematics knowledge and pedagogical skills can be attained by inspiring Mathematics teachers to further their education in Mathematics and by attending Mathematics-based workshops organised by the specialists. One HoD had this to say:

> *"In workshops teachers will get a chance to share information with colleagues and able to discuss challenges that they faced when teaching learners and this helps them to accumulate more skills and strategies to be used in the class which will improve learner performance." (HoD 3)*

The HoDs further showed that adequate pedagogical content knowledge is necessary for English and Mathematics teachers to improve learners' academic performance in ANA. One HoD proposed:

> *"I think that relevant school based and clustered workshops targeting English and Mathematics teachers should be conducted if the usefulness of pedagogical content knowledge is to be enhanced." (HoD 5)*

The HoDs established that teachers need incessant professional development in English and Mathematics to develop strategic intervention for effective teaching. Teachers should be in-serviced regularly and adequately in the use of appropriate learner-centred teaching methods for teaching and learning of English and Mathematics. According to Spaull (2013b) many South African teachers still have low basic content knowledge of the subjects they teach as a result of the incompetence of in-service training initiatives. A system of identifying which teachers need help is urgently required. The Department of Basic Education should provide teachers with regular in-service training based on content knowledge of the curriculum to improve English and Mathematical knowledge. It is vital that thorough in-service training that span a long duration is designed to prepare teachers with the knowledge they need to teach effectively.

Seemingly, Marsh (2012) is of the opinion that districts are in vantage position to provide necessary and regular support to teachers through various in-service programmes, however one of the challenges of districts is the inadequate capacity or limited number of subject advisors. This is why regular professional development programmes are not designed for teachers. Ajani (2019), also indicated in his study that teachers were not pleased with most of the existing professional development activities because the contents of these activities were not related to classroom needs of the teachers.

7. Implications for Current Reforms

If the large assessment tests are to fulfil the conditions for systemic improvement of teachers' classroom practices and learners' academic performance, there are several lessons to be learnt from the findings of this study. Therefore, there is need for Annual National Assessments to be effectively implemented in South African contexts.

Firstly, it is essential that the standards-based system relates to learners' instructional tasks in national curriculum. In principle, the goals and expectations of the large-scale assessment align with classroom or curriculum goals. This enables the system to effectively measure learners' academic performance. The study showed that there is wrong ANA timing and lack of ANA relevant documents for its effectiveness. The DBE should ensure ANAs are written in the fourth term when the syllabus for the whole year has been covered and that all relevant documentation such as, the ANA activities, ANA exemplars, administration guidelines, data entry tools and guidelines have been adequately provided to schools in advance.

Secondly, inadequate pedagogical content knowledge of English and Mathematics teachers to teach effectively is a challenge that results in learners' poor performance in ANA. Teachers should attain a good knowledge of the subject matter, this will result promote teachers' competency and confidence in the subjects. A demonstration of subject incompetence by an English First Additional Language and Mathematics teacher leads learners to lose confidence in the teacher and then in the subject. Therefore, the DBE also needs to financially motivate English and Mathematics teachers to acquire additional knowledge and certificates in English and Mathematics studies.

Thirdly, participants specified that lack of English First Additional Language and Mathematics curriculum advisors influence learners' poor performance in ANA English and Mathematics. The DBE therefore needs to increase the number of curriculum advisors who can regularly monitor, mentor and support English and Mathematics teachers in the teaching and learning of English and Mathematics in primary schools for improvement of learners' performance in ANA. More subject-advisors should be appointed and trained to provide responsive support to teachers in their specialised fields. These advisors need to design feasible plans or strategies to improve classroom practices of teachers in their subject areas, which in turn, will enhance learners' academic performance in the subjects.

Fourthly, the study has shown poor supervision by SMTs as contributing factors to poor learner performance. Teachers stated that SMTs need appropriate strategies to monitor the implementation and administration of the curriculum policy at classroom level. The SMTs need to ensure effective teaching and learning in school through efficient monitoring of curriculum implementation. SMTs should ensure that their schools are well resourced. All learning resources that will motivate and maintain learners' interest in English First Additional Language and Mathematics learning and meaningful understanding of English and Mathematical topics. The DBE needs should regularly conduct SMTs workshops particularly the HoDs for effective curriculum monitoring in English and Mathematics.

Finally, curriculum, instruction and assessment are interdependent and interrelated in education system, it is significant for the Department of Basic Education to evidently outline education standards or objectives that align with the curriculum (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; Shewbridge *et al.*, 2011). It is inevitable therefore, that curriculum, instruction and assessment are not aligned and this makes the learners' achievement compromised.

8. Conclusion

Annual National Assessments is extremely beneficial to learners' progress and influence teaching and curriculum coverage, only when effectively implemented. Test results show strong indications to learners and teachers about what constitutes acceptable performance and progressive reports. The overall decay in ANA success between grades is also enormously ambiguous, because it submits that the problem lies higher up in the system. But all research demonstrates inability of the learners to acquire foundational skills in grades one to three and that serves as foundational root cause for underperformance in higher grades

English First Additional Language and Mathematics teachers do not possess adequate expertise due to insufficient support and knowledge from the English and Mathematics curriculum advisors. School Management Teams lack strategic tools for effective monitoring for implementation of curriculum in schools. Teachers require in-service training on quality teaching and learning of English First Additional Language and Mathematics. Teachers need to be empowered with adequate pedagogical content knowledge of these subjects. They need to create extra lessons for learners with learning difficulties; they need to understand and support learners with different learning abilities. Furthermore, parents and guardians should take active role to support the learners in academic activities.

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