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A SOCIAL REALIST PERSPECTIVE OF CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATORS IN IMPLEMENTING THE REVISED CURRICULUM IN OMPUNDJA CIRCUIT IN NAMIBIA

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**A SOCIAL REALIST PERSPECTIVE OF CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATORS IN
IMPLEMENTING THE REVISED CURRICULUM IN OMPUNDJA CIRCUIT IN
NAMIBIA**

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Abstract

Purpose: This article explores the challenges experienced by Namibian public schools' educators when implementing the revised curriculum in Ompundja Circuit and suggests how the challenges can be addressed.

Methodology: A qualitative design using a semi-structured interview guide was employed to collect data from five purposively sampled principals. About 45-minute long face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the principals. The data collected through interviews were transcribed and read several times to make meaning from the volume data. After reading all the interview transcripts, various codes were assigned to themes using a priori or pre-existing coding. The interpretation was derived from the transcribed responses of participants.

Findings: The study found that there are structural, cultural and agential constrains that could hinder the successful management and implementation of the revised curriculum in Namibian public schools in Ompundja Circuit. These challenges may derail the purpose of instructional leadership, which seeks to improve learners' academic performance country-wide. The study proposed some enabling mechanisms to address the identified challenges.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: This study made a set of recommendations such as: training of educators on curriculum implementation should be conducted regularly; stakeholders should be provided with the necessary instructional materials and teachers are encouraged to use alternative teaching and learning resources. Further, it is recommended that the teacher-learner ratio policy should be morphed to respond to contexts. It is also recommended that schools should mobilise monetary or in-kind assistance from stakeholders, including parents. The current policy that prevents schools from soliciting school development funds from parents and denies teachers the opportunities to use the Universal Primary Education funds for educational excursions should be revised. It is also recommended that schools should be provided with the necessary physical infrastructures. Finally, it is recommended that teachers should be involved in every curriculum development process and decision making thereof.

Keywords: *Curriculum, Revised Curriculum, Educators, Constrains, Challenges, Social Realist*

1. INTRODUCTION

Although curriculum is work in progress, most developed countries around the globe have passed the stage of addressing challenges of lack of physical and instructional resources that directly affect the implementation of any educational program. Such countries ensure that their curricula are responsive to their current context due to revolution in the information and communication technology (ICT). In Africa, educators are still grappling with issues related to teacher training, teacher-learner ratio, and teaching and learning resources among others. This study mostly reviewed literature from developing countries across the African continent namely; Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The challenges experienced by educators in developing countries are not different from the challenges faced by educators in Namibia.

The National Conference on Education that took place in Namibia, Windhoek from the 27th of June 2011 to the 1st of July 2011 resolved to make changes to the basic education curriculum. This culminated in the Revised Curriculum for Basic Education, which is under implementation from 2015 to 2022. Hence, this article focuses on the implementation of the Revised Curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia. The aim of the Revised Curriculum for Basic Education, among others, is to fulfil Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations while also ensuring equitable quality education for all (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2017). Revised Curriculum for Basic Education is geared to respond to the challenges and needs of the Namibian society (Ministry of Education, 2015) that the previous curricula failed to accomplish. It is also aimed at fast-tracking the realisation of the goal of Namibia Vision 2030 that seeks to increase the quality of life of Namibians to the level of their counterparts in the developed world by the year 2030 (Government Republic of Namibia, 2004). The Vision 2030, further stipulates that by 2030 Namibia will be a prosperous, flourishing and developed nation. Largely, the recent curricular change in Namibia aims to fast-track the country's developmental agenda so that by 2030 the country would have industrialised and developed.

It is believed that effective education is one of the pillars that could fast-track Namibia to an industrialised nation by the year 2030 as stipulated in Vision 2030 (Government Republic of Namibia, 2004). It is against this background that this article aims to explore the challenges experienced by educators of public schools in Ompundja Circuit in Oshana Region when implementing the revised curriculum and suggest ways to address the identified challenges. Furthermore, the article proposes solutions that could be used by curriculum implementation stakeholders to address the obstacles experienced in the implementation of the revised curriculum for basic education.

Research objectives:

The article is based on the following objectives, namely:

- (1) Identifying challenges experienced by public school educators in Ompundja Circuit with the implementation of the newly revised basic education curriculum.
- (2) Determine how the challenges experienced by public school educators could be addressed to ensure successful implementation of the revised curriculum.

Statement of the problem

Since 2014 there has been a curricular reform that was adopted in the Cabinet's third meeting on the 25th of March 2014. This meeting approved curricular reform for basic education and the eight-year implementation plan. The aim of revising curricula is to bring balance to the socio-economic and political development of a country. Ahmadi and Lukman (2015) opine that it is pivotal to note that, it is one thing to develop or design a curriculum, and another to implement it effectively. The approval of the Revised Curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia could not be pardoned from Ahmadi and Lukman's assertion. The Revised Curriculum for Basic Education should be effectively implemented if it is to achieve the desired outcomes. There are only a few known studies (e.g., Nghihalwa, 2018, and Amunkete, 2020) that were conducted in Namibia on the newly revised curriculum implementation which started in 2015 to 2022. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to explore the experiences of public schools' educators on challenges with implementation of the revised curriculum in Ompundja Circuit and suggest how the challenges can be addressed.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature review starts with the discussion of the social realist theory's three analytical domains. Further, the article reviews various literature on obstacles to effective curricular implementation.

Social Realist Theory

Grant and Osanloo (2014) identify the theoretical framework as a moonpath or blueprint of research and one of the significant facets of the inquiry procedure. It is a theory that informs and clarifies the structure and visual modality of the research. A theoretical framework underpins a study or is an analytical lens through which a study is viewed. Social Realism Theory of Margaret Archer a British sociologist underpinned this study.

Social Realist Theory is developed from a Critical Realism as a philosophical theory advanced by a British sociologist, Roy Bhaskar since the 1970s, who acknowledged that external reality is independent of human action and thought (Slemming, 2019). Put simply, the self is the doer or subject while the external reality is the object towards which an action is performed. Bhaskar (2008) argues that realities must not be conflated or mixed up with our experience of it. Further, Bhaskar elucidates that there are three levels of three strata of what is (ontology) (Boughey & McKenna, 2017; Slemming, 2019). The first stratum is empirical and constitutes the experiences and observations on which explorations of reality must commence. Human beings experience and observe the world differently. The second stratum is actual, constituting events that take place in the world. The actual and empirical co-exist as events are experienced as they happen. The last stratum is the reality that is made up of both natural and social structures as well as mechanisms. These strata co-exist but cannot be conflated for analytical purposes, they should be separately analysed.

Archer (1995, 1996, 2003) developed a Social Realism Theory, as an analytical tool that can be used to understand the social world. Theoretical viewpoint resonates with the thoughts of Archer's Social Realism that it is a theoretical lens to better understand events and experiences of the social world in relation to the implementation of the Revised Curriculum for Basic Education in public

schools in Ompundja Circuit in Namibia. A social context is made up of “people” (agents) and the “parts” (structure and culture) (Archer, 1995). “Both culture and structure are important aspects of social life” (Boughey, 2012, p. 62). Further, Boughey clarifies that agency refers to the personal and psychological makeup of the actors; how they relate socially as well as how they use their capacity to act voluntarily.

In order to understand human interactions in a social context, it is necessary to understand how agents, in a socio-cultural context, respond to constraints and enablement. Quinn (2012) states that a realist understands the social world in which phenomena are investigated to discourse causal processes at different levels of the social world. The social world is made up of the entities of structure (rules, committees and material resources), culture (values, norms, beliefs and relationships) and agency (individuals or groups of people) that can be examined separately without conflating them. Agency is shaped by structure and culture in a social setting that has the potential to enable or constrain it (Singh, 2015). Each of the domains, separately, has the potential to enable or constrain the achieving effective implementation an education policy such as a curriculum. Because once the parts (people and culture) are conflated, it is impossible to distinguish if the agency is being exercised or not. The three domains should be viewed as separate domains of reality, each with properties and powers (Shalyefu, 2018). Once one understands the separate contribution of the three domains of Social Realism to a social setting then one may understand the interplay between them (Mogashana, 2015). Despite separate analyses of the three domains, it is important to note that they are interrelated when they interact.

As discussed above, Archer (1995, 1996, 2003) also emphasised that in order to understand a social world, structure, culture and agency should be analysed separately without conflating them. For example, Boughey (2012, p. 62), indicated that “in sociology, there has long been a tendency to conflate the ‘parts’ (i.e. culture and structure) and the ‘people’ (agency). Boughey further argues that conflating the ‘parts’ and the ‘people’ constitute duality, which renders it impossible to identify if the agency is being exercised. In amplifying this, social realism domains should be analysed separately to avoid a ‘fallacy of conflation’, which comes as a result of upward, central and downward conflation. The upward conflation happens where there is a denial of autonomy to the structure which makes the agents to have more power than the structure. Meanwhile, central conflation is when a structure is reproduced through people where power is constrained and enabled simultaneously by the structure. Lastly, downward conflation is when the structure has more power than the agents. Margaret Archer’s Social Realism Theory is relevant to this study because it unveils the structural, cultural and agential constraints and enabling mechanisms to the revised curriculum implementation in Ompundja Circuit in Namibia. The respondents to this study did not only identify challenges that they experience but they also proposed enabling interventions for addressing those challenges. The theory proposed that the three domains of structure, culture and agency should be analysed separately without conflating them so that it is easier to establish if agency is being exercised. Whenever the domains analysed their interrelations, interplay and interaction should be considered.

2.1.1 Structure

Structure is the world out there with physical and human material interests as well as roles that may be unequally distributed, in a social realm (Archer, 1996; Boughey, 2012). It is also about

social roles and positions. The changes in structures contribute to the changes in other domains, which are culture (beliefs, norms, values) and agency (people as individuals or a group). It is imperative to provide enabling mechanisms, within structures, to ensure effective curriculum implementation. Structures in the basic education setting in Ompundja Circuit are such as committees, policies, financial and human resource or infrastructural materials. For example, structures such as committees are social groups that set boundaries of who should be present at events where important decisions that support curriculum implementation may be taken and how they may affect the learners and society in general. The structures can complement or contradict one another and require agents with powers and properties to transform their social context.

2.1.2 Culture

According to Archer (1995), culture is made up of beliefs, opinions, ideas, theories, values, concepts and myths that may exist independently with or without agents being aware of them. The culture manifests through discourses used by specific agents and actors at a particular time. Discourses are real and may constrain or enable curriculum implementation in a particular context. Culture is about how people think about things and has the causal powers to influence some players to enable or constrain things. Effective implementation of the revised curriculum may be constrained or enabled by the culture within a social context.

Culture can be unveiled through discourses that are prevalent in a particular context (Vorster & Quinn, 2017). Some of the transformational discourses that are contained in the four goals for education in Namibia are: access, equity, quality, and democracy. These were adopted two years after Namibia gained its independence (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

Like structural items, cultures can be complementary or contradictory to one another, where the latter creates “situational logics” (Archer, 1996). The parts (structure and culture) have an effect on how people can or cannot exercise their agency in a particular situation. Thus, Archer (1995) affirms that, although the actors and parts are intertwined, if they are analytically conflated, it is difficult for each stratum to change over time or to exert causal influence on each other. This means that the parts or the agents cannot exert influence over the other.

2.1.3 Agency

Agency is about human action and interactions that may change or transform things or keep them static. Agents are people who operate within a particular structural and cultural system. Social interaction of agents in a particular context can bring about structural or cultural changes (i.e. morphogenesis) or may keep things unchanged (i.e. morphostasis). Emergent personal powers and properties are exercised as people interact with parts (structure and culture) (Archer, 2003).

In the context at hand, there are several role players (agents) in the implementation of the revised curriculum for basic education in public schools in Ompundja Circuit. Amunkete (2020) listed the agents that form up a structure of Curriculum Coordinating Committee (CCC) for basic education in Namibia. These include the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), teacher training institutions, regional directors of education, inspectors of education, principals and teachers. Teachers are a critical element in the implementation of a curriculum (Angula, 2015). Amunkete (2020) alluded that teachers play an important role in guiding the curriculum designers by specifying the needs of learners, teachers and society. The teachers and school principals are

the other key stakeholders in the process of implementing this curriculum in Ompundja Circuit. Teachers are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of teaching, learning and assessment activities and they are the mediators of classroom practice (Angula, 2015).

School principals are overseeing Revised Curriculum for Basic Education implementation activities at their respective schools in Ompundja Circuit. Angula (2015) indicates that principals deploy staff, allocate teaching time to subjects, provide devices to assist teaching and learning, as well as creating a conducive teaching and learning environment. These actors should be equipped with the necessary powers and properties in exercising their agency to implement various components of the Revised Curriculum for Basic Education in public schools in Ompundja Circuit in Namibia.

Arguing from analytical dualism, Archer (1995) states that each of the three entities of Social Realism (structure, culture and agency) are interdependent. They should be examined separately before trying to understand the interplay between them. For instance, the interaction of these three domains can constrain or enable effective implementation of Revised Curriculum for Basic Education in public schools in Ompundja Circuit. It can result in transformation or change in form (morphogenesis) or maintaining of the status quo or stability of form (morphostasis). This article uses Archer's Social Realism theory as a theoretical framework to understand the structural, cultural and agential challenges experienced by educators in implementing the revised curriculum in public schools in Ompundja Circuit.

2.2 Curricula implementation challenges

This section discusses the challenges encountered during education policies and curricula implementations. The challenges are related to teacher training, infrastructures or physical resources, teaching and learning resources, budgetary or financial resources, teacher-learner ratio, learner support, as well as teachers' feelings and views of the revised curriculum.

2.2.1 Teacher training

This part discusses the curriculum implementation challenges related to teacher training. It starts with staff qualifications and challenges thereof, in-service training of staff as well as their skills and knowledge. Some studies linked the challenges, obstacles or impediments of curriculum implementation to lack of qualified staff (Achimugu, 2016; Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015; Mingaine, 2013; Tubaundule, 2014). Some of these studies opine that there are common impediments to curriculum implementations that are linked to lack of qualified staff. Availability of qualified human resources enables effective teaching and learning, if the teachers are not adequately qualified to teach with confidence, this may negatively affect the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

The literature reviewed here is about the training of staff. Several studies have found that lack of training has a negative impact on education curriculum implementation (Altinyelken, 2010; Badugela, 2012; Iita, 2014; Josua, 2013; Lumadi, 2014; Magongoa, 2011; Makunja, 2016; Olateru-Olagbegi, 2015; Patius, 2014; Quest, 2014; Selepe, 2016). If teachers are not adequately trained on how to implement the new curriculum they may not be able to appropriately dispense information to learners in their schools. For instance, Patius (2014) found that factors that influence the implementation of the curriculum in public primary schools in Ukwala division of the Siaya

County in Kenya are related to inadequate teachers' training. It is stated, in that study, that teachers were not adequately trained in the curriculum or course of study. The lack of training among teachers is a setback because teachers will have limited knowledge and skills to share with learners in public schools in Ompundja Circuit in Namibia.

These are challenges related to skills and knowledge. Syomwene (2013) discusses the factors affecting teachers in the implementation of curriculum reform and education policies in Kenya. Syomwene's study cited inefficient school leadership as another hindrance to curriculum reform and education policy implementations. The inefficiency of school leadership is also attributed to a lack of knowledge and skills. Training, skills and knowledge are interrelated components that could improve learners' academic performance. Knowledge and skills are essential competencies that can be acquired through different forms of training, where educators in public schools in Ompundja Circuit could profit from the findings of Syomwene's study.

2.2.2 Infrastructure or physical resources

Infrastructural or physical resources play a role in a curriculum implementation process. These are material resources or structural hindrances or enablers to curriculum implementation. Challenges related to infrastructures or physical resources that may affect the implementation of the revised curriculum are discussed. There are challenges related to the curriculum implementation process that are related to infrastructure or physical resources (Agih, 2015; Altinyelken, 2010; Ayasra, 2015; Lumadi, 2014; Magongoa, 2011; Syomwene, 2013). Improved academic performance is enhanced by the availability of relevant physical infrastructures such as classrooms, science and computer laboratories. Quality of infrastructures motivates both teachers and learners who get motivated to improve teaching and learning as well as academic performance.

2.2.3 Instructional resources

Teaching and learning resources make up the physical resources (structures), which if they are not available they may negatively influence success in curriculum implementation. Taole (2015) contents that the availability of teaching and learning resources plays a vital role in the efficient delivery of quality teaching and learning. Challenges linked to teaching and learning resources affect the effectiveness of teaching and learning, as well as policies and curricula implementations.

Iita (2014, p.105) opines that lack of teaching resources "seriously hinders the teaching and learning of any subject". Effective teaching and learning cannot take place without the necessary teaching and learning materials (Bamidele & Bakare, 2015; Dzimiri & Marimo, 2015; Tjihenuna, 2015). Shortage in teaching and learning resources is detrimental to learners' motivation and academic performance. As long as there are adequate teaching and learning assistive devices and resources, learners are motivated to challenge the subjects that are deemed difficult. The basic education curriculum in Namibia is reformed after every five years to align it with skills, values and attitudes needed to keep up with changes brought about by globalisation (Nghihalwa, 2018). The basic education graduates need functional attributes especially in science and mathematics that enable them to survive in the 21st century.

Some of the studies reviewed have found that lack of teaching and learning resources is a challenge to the implementation of education policies as well as curricula implementation (Angula, 2015; Dzimiri & Marimo, 2015; Iita, 2014; Josua, 2013; Tubaundule, 2014). Teaching and learning

resources are important pillars in any education setting, as revealed by research (e.g. Altinyelken, 2010; Angula, 2015; Badugela, 2012; Magongoa, 2011; Mkandawire, 2010) and Ompunja Circuit is no exception. Similar conclusion can therefore be from the studies that deficiency of teaching and learning materials in public schools in Ompundja Circuit can also obstruct effective curriculum implementation.

2.2.4 Financial resources

Archer (1995, 1996 and 2003) refers to lack or availability of financial resources as a structural mechanism that can be enabling or constraining and should be carefully considered in any educational setting. Financial resources are used to acquire teaching and learning materials, to fund training initiatives such as workshops, conferences and seminars, upkeep of the physical resources such as buildings and procure teaching and learning aids. The availability or non-availability of funds could exert a causal effect on agency and culture. If these resources are lacking, then effective teaching and learning could be in jeopardy and may not be successfully fulfilled. Several studies found constrains related to lack of financial resources hinder effective education policy implementation (Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015; Altinyelken, 2010; Badugela, 2012; Mingaine, 2013; Syomwene, 2013). Schools need money to procure teaching and learning resources and ensuring the upkeep of physical infrastructures. However, they argue further that there is more that teachers can do, using alternative teaching and learning resources, without requiring any budget. Thus, educators should improvise alternative indigenous resources to fill the gap. There may also be some things in schools that cannot be done without a budget. Once there is no budget, it may derail effective teaching and learning. Therefore, stakeholders in education should think of alternative ways to acquire funds to ensure that the necessary resources are made available.

2.2.5 Teacher-learner ratio

Acceptable staffing norms for mainstream schools in Namibia ensure that there is one (1) teacher for every 35 primary learners, and 1 teacher for every 30 secondary school learners (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001). Teacher-learner ratio is prescribed by the staffing norms policy (structure) and may exert a causal effect on agency and culture. Nakale (2017) and Selepe (2016) found teacher-learner ratio to be a hindrance to effective teaching and learning as well as curriculum implementation in schools. Research further found that a high teacher-learner ratio interferes with successful curricula implementations (see, e.g., Angula, 2015; Makunja, 2016; Mkandawire, 2010; Ogunbiyi, 2012; Tubaundule, 2014).

2.2.6 Learner support

Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla and Sylvester (2014) indicted that the word “support” carries many meanings and overtones. In this article, we have not been able to locate a specific definition for the phrase learner support after a rigorous literature review. Smit (2020) arrives at a similar conclusion that no specific defining could be found in the literature consulted. Bojuwoye et al., (2014), view learning support as an act of assisting learners in meeting their academic, social and emotional needs. When providing learner support, educators should recognise the unique abilities of every learner. A learner is central to his or her academic, social and emotional needs despite their diverse abilities. Teachers are supposed to devise differentiated learning support approaches depending on the abilities of a specific learner. Briefly, learner support aims to remove barriers to learning in order to improve academic performance.

2.2.7 Feelings and views

In this sub-section, some study findings that relate to feelings and views, on curricula changes and implementation, are discussed. The domain of culture describes the ideas, beliefs, theories, values and ideologies which are demonstrated through discourses used in particular social contexts by the agents at particular times (Archer, 2003). The non-involvement of key stakeholders in the curriculum or policy design and planning serves as a factor that may influence effective education policy or curriculum implementation when implementers adopt negative perception, which are characteristics of a culture (Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015; Gwembire & Katsaruware, 2013; Ogunbiyi, 2012; Tubaundule, 2014). Negative attitudes, beliefs and values are cultural constraints to the effective curriculum implementation. A source of negative perception has to be addressed in order to build confidence among the implementing agents so that the curriculum could be implemented with success.

A number of studies reviewed focused on a single education curriculum or policy implementation. For instance, Achimugu (2016) studied the implementation of senior secondary education Chemistry curriculum, while Ahmadi and Lukman (2015) focused on issues and prospects of effective implementation of new secondary school curriculum in Nigeria, and Altinyelken (2010) studied the teachers' perspective on new thematic curriculum change in Uganda. In Namibia, Amunkete (2020) focused on the experiences of Namibian Senior Primary School teachers in curriculum design while Angula (2015) studied teachers' views on the implementation of the compulsory mathematics curriculum. Quest (2014) studied the principals' perceptions on ICT implementation in secondary schools in Namibia. Most of these studies concentrated on a single policy of curriculum area and not the entire basic education revised curriculum. This indicates to a gap because the revised curriculum covers all components and phases of the revised basic education curriculum implementation in Namibia.

None of the studies reviewed has used the Social Realist Theory as an analytical tool to understand the constrains and enabling mechanisms to education curriculum and policy implementation. This points to an analytical gap, which this study sought to close. Furthermore, the studies reviewed are from different contexts such as West Africa (Nigeria), East Africa (Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya), Southern Africa (South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Namibia) and Asia Jordan. The review did not go deeper in the literature on education policy and curriculum implementation from developed countries, which is points to a contextual gap and the need to address therefore.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article engages qualitative evidence collected from a sample of five purposively selected school principals. In doing so, it adopts the interpretivist paradigm because this philosophical assumption believes that truth and reality are mentally constructed or created and not discovered through numerical construction due to the following reasons (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Firstly, they seek to understand how individuals interpret the world around them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The authors adopt Archer's social realism theory as a lens through which constraints to effective curriculum implementations were analysed. A semi-structured interview guide was used as data generating guide from participants. An approximately 45 minutes face-to-face interview was conducted with each participant. Once the interviews were completed the data were

transcribed and read several times to make meaning from the voluminous data. After reading all the interview transcripts, the codes were assigned to themes using a priori or pre-existing coding. Codes were developed before scrutinising the current data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). A coding process started from the process of reviewing pieces of literature. The data collected were analysed using the content analysis method. The interpretations were derived from the transcribed responses of participants and the reviewed literature on hindrances to education policy or curricula implementation. The data were presented narratively and supported with the direct quotes from the participants.

4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

In this article we highlight several challenges that could constrain the effective implementation of the revised curriculum for basic education in public schools in Ompundja Circuit. These challenges are categorised into the three domains of Social Realism, which are structure, culture and agency.

4.1 Structural constrains and enabling intersections

4.1.1 Structural constrains

Structural constraints or challenges are the material interests, such as physical and human material resources (Archer, 1996). These material interests can constrain or enable effective curriculum implementation.

Archer (1996) has defined the structure as the world out there with physical and human material interests and roles, which may be unequally distributed in a social realm such as schools. Structures are such as policies, regulations, physical and human material mechanisms. The changes in physical and human material contribute to changes in the culture (beliefs, norms, attitude, values or views) and agency (people or actors).

Participants were asked to comment on the availability of instructional resources. One of the respondents, Kondja responded as follows:

“Since the revised curriculum, the textbooks were changed and we have not yet reached the ratio of one-to-one book per learner.”

This was how Nomkumo responded:

“We are trying, by all means, to make sure that we deploy the limited resources at our disposal. It will not be successful if there are no quality teaching and learning resources at our disposal.”

Some of the physical resource constraints include lack of teaching and learning resources, which hinders effective teaching and learning and subsequent successful revised curriculum implementation. This finding is in line with Taole (2015, p. 274) who indicated that the *“availability of resources plays a critical role in the efficient delivery of the curriculum”*. Lack of ICT resources and internet connectivity as well as ill-equipped science laboratories are a challenge to effective teaching and learning. In addition, the lack of textbooks and slow delivery of the purchased textbooks are a hindrance to successful teaching and learning. Lack of textbooks results in learners sharing textbooks. This renders the one-child one-textbook policy in schools to be a

wild dream and has a negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning. A shortage of teaching and learning resources is a hindrance to creating a conducive climate for effective teaching and learning resulting in poor academic performance (Altinyelken, 2010; Dzimiri & Marimo, 2015; Iita, 2014; Josua, 2013; Mkandawire, 2010; Tjihenuna, 2015). The primary purpose of schools is effective teaching and learning, which should get more support than other activities in schools.

Participants were also asked about the availability of physical resources and some of their responses are as follows:

Etuhole gave her response regarding challenges related to infrastructures and physical resources in this manner:

"I suggest that the Ministry of Education can provide the buildings such as laboratory and library. We need the library for our books to be kept, as well as the space to have 2 or 3 computers to teach our learners."

While Afrika also gave the following challenges:

"Today, we have Physics and Chemistry in other words the content on its own is advanced such that now there is a need for physical structure that can now contain the advance Physics and Chemistry. One could also then indicate in the area of Science Kits and I believe that this is coming with the advancement of this subject and of course in terms of the furniture this is not necessarily coming because of curriculum reform."

Structural constraints are related to the infrastructure and physical resources that are in short supply. These are such as lack of classrooms, science and computer laboratories, hostel accommodation facilities and vocational practical workshops. The shortage of physical resources impedes effective teaching and learning, and derails effective academic performance. Participants have indicated that they are provided with the curriculum documents (structures), which may enable or constrain the implementation of educational policy in schools.

Another structural challenge is related to the non-availability of funds. Some participants gave the following responses regarding availability of funds:

Nomkumo responded as follows:

"Yes, funding is a problem. The ratio provided on the amount of funds as per the learner is not quite sufficient thus far."

Etuhole gave the following answer:

"The Ministry provides us with UPE but in many cases, it is not sufficient for our needs and also the private stakeholders who use to sponsor schools nowadays are very scarce."

Tuuda said the following:

"An economy of the state that has scrapped a bit has impacted our schools. One would say if the provision of funds could be made as it was done before the global economic downturn that we are experiencing now... But now with this, it is becoming worse because we are getting

very little and again the big problem is that we are reminded not to at least solicit funds from the parents.”

Funds are enabling mechanisms of effective curriculum implementation. This supports studies that found that shortage or lack of funds inhibits effective curriculum implementation (Altinyelken, 2010; Dzimiri & Marimo, 2015; Mingaine, 2013). Money pays for learners' excursions and educational tours. Educational tours enable real-life and social learning. Free education declaration has also contributed to the lack of funds at schools. Schools are now provided with Universal Primary Education funds but some participants feel these funds are not timely delivered while some participants are divided on whether the funds are sufficient or insufficient. Some participants felt that structures that prohibits schools from soliciting funds from parents has an effect on effective teaching and learning. Funds, if available, can be used to expose teachers to professional development. The economic downturn has also contributed to a shortage of funds at schools. Lack of funds hampers successful teaching and learning because some educational activities depend on the availability of funds to facilitate effective teaching and learning activities.

4.2.2 Structural enabling interventions

This article suggests several enabling interventions to address the shortage of teaching and learning resources as follows:

Kondja responded as follows:

“Since the revised curriculum, the textbooks were changed and we have not yet reached the level of one-to-one book per learner.”

Nomkumo emphasised that:

“Teachers are finding it difficult to come up with quality teaching and learning resources or teaching aids in terms of subject of corners, which are reliable and valid to the education process of our learners.”

On the contrary, Nomkumo elaborate as follows:

“It is true; there are no sufficient ICT equipment. In our context, we are lucky because our school was funded under the MCA and we have laptops, we have projectors, we have internet connectivity, which is quite reliable. We are not finding this as a challenge, but I have witnessed other schools in the region that are not deployed yet with available ICT equipment.”

Nomkumo shares some bureaucratic delays in delivery of textbooks as follows:

“Procuring of textbook resources is quite slow. ... Because of bureaucracy that is in place. This year alone we did not receive any textbook thus far. Although we have ordered, it is affecting the successful implementation of the revised curriculum.”

Teachers should use alternative or indigenous teaching and learning resources at their disposal. The participants requested the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to avail teaching and learning resources on time. Additionally, participants suggested that schools that offer vocational discipline subjects are advised to ensure that assistive teaching and learning resources for vocational subjects are made available. School libraries should be stocked up with teaching and

learning resources. Lastly, schools are advised to have functional information communication technology resources and internet connectivity that may enhance effective teaching and learning.

Regarding the supply of adequate infrastructure and physical resources, the participants suggested that practical workshops should be built at schools that offer vocational subjects.

Nomkumo made the following suggestion:

“I single out that for a school to qualify should have enough infrastructures such as laboratories, libraries and other specialised rooms. So, it is true that the curriculum will not be successful if there are no sufficient laboratories put in place.”

Etuhole responded by providing an alternative on how to address infrastructural challenges:

“We need computers, that is the reason I said we need a Computer Lab.”

Afrika was asked to propose remedies to address those shortcomings and stated as follows:

“Of course, talking about the subjects in terms of the advancement one would possibly think and wish to see the supply of infrastructures that are not very easy to come by. And then things like Science Kits; and possibly reworking on the building that we use to have just to equip them with items, which are friendly to the revised curriculum.”

Additionally, more classrooms, computer and science laboratories should be constructed. A ministry responsible for education should chip in to construct educational infrastructure as well as renovation of existing buildings to contain the activities of Revised Curriculum for Basic Education.

Lack of funds could be addressed as suggested by the participants. Stakeholders such as the corporate community and parents should support schools financially.

Nomkumo proposed the following:

“I support the effort of the government of introducing the Universal Free Primary Education. For the past 12 years, I have been a school principal, when it comes to School Development Funds (SDFs) was not sufficient.”

Etuhole responded as follows:

“One of them is that the UPE may be extended per learner and also the stakeholders can be motivated by the regional director via various meetings to assist schools in their needs.”

Further, Etuhole hinted about SDF to be re-introduced as follows:

“Yes, it should be reintroduced again together with UPE especially in the rural schools. When you happen to ask parents from the rural area to come support, some understand the situation, but some do not want to take part.”

It is recommended here that the Ministry of Education should finance revised curriculum activities. Some participants—and this is same position taken by the authors—proposed the re-introduction of the School Development Funds (SDFs) or for the Universal Primary Education (UPE) funds per

child to be increased. Some participants called for the provision of both Universal Primary Education (UPE) funds and School Development Funds (SDFs) for schools.

4.2 Cultural constraints and enabling interventions

4.2.1 Cultural constraints

Culture is articulated in policy documents, schools' vision, and mission statements or discourses within an organisational setup. Culture can either enable or constrain effective curriculum implementation in a social setting such as a school. This article found several cultural constraints such as the lack of teacher training, which contribute to a knowledge gap among teachers. These are presented below.

Nomkumo had this to say:

"It is a new thing and teachers need to study the curriculum so that they acquaint themselves with the content thereof."

Etuhole reacted to the question of challenges encountered in the revised curriculum implementation that are related to teacher training as follows:

"I can say the training has been conducted even though it was in very short time because some of the training was conducted only three days or if it is long, it is only five days." Now the problem is that not all people can capture the information at the same time. Yeah... some are very quick, some are very slow."

Tuuda gave the following training challenge:

"Yes, there are challenges more particularly on the training of teachers. There was an initial training which was given at the beginning there, but that training was not enough". ...It was kind of a haphazard training it was not really taking teacher to at least possibility to go topic by topic."

Inadequate training was stated by participants as a constraint to school academic effectiveness. A level of Revised Curriculum for Basic Education is rated higher than the previous curriculum. Thus, some participants believe that the revised curriculum is a new concept which teachers should acquaint themselves with so that they could implement it with success. There are also several challenges such as teachers' inability to plan inclusive lessons, lack of training on learner support among teachers, which should be done by advisory teacher services, and some participants deem learner support provided more theoretical than practical. Learner support is an effort towards effective teaching and learning takes place (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2014).

Other cultural challenges are related to feelings and views, which are accentuated in teachers' discourses. Teachers hold the view that the new curriculum was designed top-down without the involvement of teachers who are the key implementers (Amunkete, 2020). Teachers are at the forefront of ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place in a classroom. Teachers feel they are made to implement a curriculum that is planned by those that do not teach. Therefore, their view concurs with Nghihalwa (2018), who praised the importance of involving teachers in curriculum development because teachers continuously engage with learners on a daily basis.

Another talk in the revised curriculum context is the lack of in-service training given to teachers. The participants responded as follows. Kondja said:

“Yeah, well there should be workshops or in-service training as they call it. It is very essential for teachers that are already teaching to be trained on the revised curriculum, especially the new topics that are added to the grades. So that at the end of the day they will acquaint themselves with all interventions and concepts so that curriculum implementation will be successful.”

Similarly, Eтуhole responded:

“In-service training can be made even during the school holidays.”

Tuuda was asked to suggest any possible interventions and responded as follows:

“Possibly training must come from the Advisory Services. They are not that much active also. They are the one who are supposed to engage teachers and at least hear where they have a problem and because sometimes the problem is topic-based or theme-based on a certain part of the syllabus and that teachers need to, then, get a support from the Advisory Services.”

Tuuda proposed how the challenges should be addressed:

“... it was given, the days were not enough not all teachers were trained at that time, now there is still again a need for intervention training to be done in between there.”

Afrika suggested that the challenges could be addressed as follows:

“At the regional level, workshops of different phases can then be conducted such that people can at least be updated in different ways. And I believe, through workshop teachers also have a chance to come together and when they come together they will live a support-based kind of which they can do on their own.”

In-service training offered to teachers contributes to the professional development of teachers at the school level (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2014). Teachers in Ompundja Circuit are not appropriately equipped with relevant knowledge and skills to implement the revised curriculum. Some participants feel that the training offered was done within a short duration while some teachers are hesitant to accept the new curriculum reform. Some teachers lack the courage to teach senior grades and others have insufficient subject knowledge. Curriculum change was inaptly communicated to teachers.

4.2.2 Cultural enabling interventions

This article proposes interventions to improve in order to address the challenges of teacher training as suggested by the participants. The article further suggests that continuous in-service training should be provided to teachers in their respective disciplines. In addition, theme-based training should be organised for teachers by advisory teacher services. There is also a need to induct novice teachers on the revised curriculum while schools are urged to recruit qualified teachers, especially in vocational subject areas. Lastly, the teachers are encouraged to share experiences and skills in their departments, schools, cluster or circuit.

These interventions are proposed to remedy the challenges that are related to learner support. Eтуhole highlighted the need for teachers' training to enhance learner support as follows:

“Advisory teachers need to come in to conduct workshops regarding the learner support to make teachers aware of it, especially those who do not know what it is all about.”

Tuuda answered as follows:

“Yes, a very serious one, these learners who are really behind (learners with special needs) they are not going to benefit anything. One of the things that they can do is to look at the teacher - learner ratio. For example, maybe there could be even two teachers for instance; there is a teacher who can be well trained to deal with those learners. Maybe it will help a bit.”

Afrika stated the following:

“So, possibly a bit of orientation can help. This is to indicate the importance of meeting the learners' other needs before thinking of the learning needs.”

There should be enrichment programmes targeting gifted as well as at-risk learners. This will keep every category of learners in check. It is found that learners with special needs in public schools in Ompundja Circuit need additional support from teachers. Another point made is that teachers need training on learner support.

Here, some studies suggested ways to address the challenges that are related to feelings and views. Amunkete (2020) claims that teachers work with learners daily and are aware of their shortcomings, but they are less involved in the process of curriculum design and development. This brings negative attitudes towards the curriculum, which they are going to implement. To the question on how this can be addressed, some participants responded as follows:

Kondja shared possible solutions as follows.

“I said the training, so the people understand why a change, those are the things that we need to explain to our staff members that we cannot stay stagnant.”

Eтуhole suggested how the challenge related to teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the implementation of the revised curriculum can be addressed.

“Then what we do to ‘adamant teachers’ is to motivate them, I have to consult those who have the knowledge and I have to send them to the relevant people to be assisted. On top of that, I have to motivate them to search the relevant resources and to consult the teachers with the same subjects so that they come together and discuss the problem together.”

Tuuda proposes another solution as follows:

“In most cases maybe, the rights of people have to be coming in, the Labor Act will also come in. But, the little that you can do sometimes is to ask whether they can be relieved to go to school where they will feel confident and then somebody who is committed enough can be brought in.”

Therefore, it is ideal to involve teachers as much as possible in curriculum planning and design. Principals are challenged to create a motivating working environment for teachers. They are also urged to cultivate a positive attitude among teaching staff. Teachers were not made aware of why the curriculum had to change, thus it is suggested that an understanding has to be created why the curriculum has to change, before the change takes place. Since the knowledge of oneself gives one confidence, a knowledgeable teacher is a motivated teacher, who could be made through regular training provided to teachers. Some teachers feel they are forced to teach grades where they are not qualified to teach; thus, in the new regime of the revised curriculum, teachers should be placed to teach grades they are qualified to teach.

4.3 Agential constraints and enabling interventions

4.3.1 Agential constraints

This study found that there are agential constraints that impede revised curriculum implementation. Agents are groups of people or individuals who operate within a particular structure and cultural system (Vorster & Quinn, 2017). Agency refers to personal and psychological makeup of the actors (Boughey, 2012), how they relate socially as well as how they use their capacity to act voluntarily. The social interaction of actors in a particular context can bring structural or cultural changes (i.e. morphogenesis) or may keep things unchanged (i.e. morphostasis). Agents should be equipped with emergent personal powers and properties that could be employed as people interact with parts – structure and culture (Archer, 2003). Implementing agents in the revised curriculum for basic education in public schools in Ompundja Circuit are such as teachers, principals, inspectors of education, director of education, learners, and parents or members of the community.

Kondja shared a concern about the future of the school due to the dwindling teacher-learner ratio as follows:

“You may think that overstaffing may be hitting the school because if the number of learners became less there will be more teachers than learners. We do not know what the future is having for us and also our school is a little bit in rural areas.”

Kondja further stated:

“Parents may prefer to take their children to other schools, because you may have parents in this community, but their children are being transported to the schools in Ongwediva and Oshakati, with taxis, every day.”

Nomkumo’s response is as follows:

“At this point in time we have a very high number of learners per teacher. Each class might have 45 learners per one teacher, which is a problem because a teacher is not able to have a hand on each and every learner equally.”

It is found that some of the agential constraints are a result of non-adherence to the implementation of the favourable teacher-learner ratio. The Ministry has set an acceptable teacher-learner ratio or staffing norm for mainstream schools that is one teacher for every 35 primary learners while for the secondary school learners is one teacher for every 30 learners (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001). This challenge is aligned with actors in education where a high teacher-

learner ratio is recorded as a result of the low number of teacher supply or a high number of learners per teacher. Meanwhile, the low teacher - learner ratio renders schools uneconomical resulting in the transfer of teachers to overcrowded schools. This has often resulted in teachers being assigned to teach subjects that they are not qualified to teach. Parents are another group of agents in the curriculum implementation, and they are advised to enroll children (agents) in rural schools. The lower enrollments of learners in rural schools bring down the teacher-learner ratio, which brings relief to teachers with high workloads (Taole, 2015).

The Namibia's Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) (2016) stresses that vocational education is a pillar of skills, knowledge and relevant technologies that are required to enable productivity in knowledge-based and transitional societies for the ear of a twenty-first century. Vocational education disciplines are therefore a prominent reform in the revised curriculum under implementation. The success of the vocational stream in schools can be halted by the lack of vocational subject teachers (agents). This is shown in the responses from participants.

Kondja said:

"I do not think we have a teacher at school that can teach other vocational subjects, like Woodwork, Bricklaying, Hospitality, Home Ecology and so on."

Nomkumo responded briefly as follows:

"I strongly believe that sufficient training was not provided. We do not have sufficient number of human resource personnel in these pre-vocational subjects such as Design and Technology."

While Tuuda indicated:

"So, we will not complain on the Home Economics but on other subjects, also depending on the ability of the Agriculture teacher, because it is supposed to have gardening and so forth. But then if the teacher is not that much active enough, then sometimes it poses challenge to full implementation of it."

This success of vocational subject implementation depends on the availability of qualified teachers as enabling agents or actors. Some schools have the agents to teach vocational subjects such Home Economics.

4.3.2 Agential enabling interventions

This study suggested some interventions to address the constraints related to the teacher-learner ratio. Schools should abide by the teacher-learner ratio prescribed in the staffing norm policy. Some responses from the participants on teacher-learner ratio are shared below.

Nomkumo remarked as follows:

"So, I suggest that the Ministry of Education should try by all means to either expand schools through infrastructural development or create new primary and secondary schools in regions or recruit more teachers, so this situation of teacher-learner ratio can be contained successfully in the successful implementation of the curriculum."

Furthermore, Nomkumo went on to suggest:

“But, I think the Ministry should do a thorough research in this regard on how to either solve the problem of teacher-learner ratio in schools in town.”

Etuhole made the following suggestion on how teacher-learner ratio in rural schools could be addressed.

“I suggest the Ministry should re-look at the teacher-learner ratio policy.”

Tuuda remarked that:

“I think the policymakers have to re-look at the teacher-learner ratio policy. It needs to be revised.”

Where there are more learners, schools should recruit more appropriately qualified teachers to cater for the learners. However, the remedy for schools with more teachers and low learner ratio voluntary transfers to schools with less teachers. A doable intervention that needs a well-coordinated database of the relevant information. Staffing norms practice of needs to be re-looked at to take out the burden resulting from the teacher-learner ratio. Ompundja Circuit has witnessed the migration of learners from rural schools to urban schools, which leaves rural schools with a low number of enrolled learners. Therefore, parents are advised and encouraged to keep children in rural schools in their communities and improve conditions in these schools.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, using Archer’s Social Realism theory the authors argue that there are Structural, Cultural and Agential constraints hampering the implementation of the revised curriculum in Ompundja circuit. The article further suggests interventions to address the identified constraints. If the interventions are tried out, they may result into effective or ineffective revised curriculum implementation in public schools in Ompundja Circuit of Oshana region in Namibia. If the negative destination is achieved then there is a need to monitor, evaluate and re-implement the suggested interventions that are not effectively addressed. Cognisant that curriculum implementation is an ongoing process rather than an end in itself, this study recommended that stakeholders should support schools with educational resources. Schools should enhance in-service training on revised curriculum implementation. Furthermore, expertise-sharing and integration of the curriculum content in teacher training programmes were recommended. Also, there is need for research about establishing the level of implementers’ participation in the planning and design of the revised curriculum for basic education and assessing the structural, cultural and agential constraints on the use of information communication technology tools in providing quality teaching and learning were recommended.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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