

Lessons learnt through Jika iMfundo programme in managing school curriculum in King Cetshwayo district: The Programme to Improve Learning Outcomes (PILO)

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Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings of a study of the interventions in curriculum management initiated by the Jika iMfundo programme in two education districts in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of what curriculum management entails based on a survey of literature, before addressing some of the problems experienced with respect to curriculum management in KZN. This provides a context for understanding the interventions introduced by Jika iMfundo to improve curriculum management and strengthen curriculum coverage in schools. The chapter then outlines the research undertaken in a sample of schools in a rural

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education district, King Cetshwayo, to provide an account of the Jika iMfundo intervention and participants' perceptions of it. The chapter discusses some of the difficulties mentioned by participants and it concludes by summing up the curriculum management challenges and achievements in these schools that have engaged with the Jika iMfundo intervention.

The KZN Department of Basic Education has a total of 12 education districts. King Cetshwayo, located to the north of uThukela River is one of these. The King Cetshwayo District Municipality (previously uThungulu District Municipality) is located in the north east of KZN, covering the area from uMfolozi River in the north to KwaGingindlovu in the south and inland to Nkandla. As Figure 5.1 shows, the district is home to five local municipalities: City of uMhlathuze, uMlalazi, Mthonjaneni, Nkandla and uMfolozi. There are nine towns in the district, namely, Empangeni, Eshowe, KwaGingindlovu, KwaMbonambi, Melmoth, Mtunzini, Nkandla, Ntambanana and Richards Bay.

King Cetshwayo is one of the two districts that participated in the Jika iMfundo pilot project in KZN which sought to develop strong curriculum management skills to strengthen support to teaching and learning in line with the aims and objectives of *Schooling 2015*.

Curriculum management

Scholars in the field of education have provided various definitions of curriculum management, from narrow to broad. The KZN Department of Education (2008) describes curriculum management as encompassing planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This definition is in line with Cameron, Owen and Tee (2007) who describe



Figure 5.1 The King Cetshwayo District Municipality

curriculum management as consisting of four stages, namely, planning, teaching, assessing and evaluating curriculum objectives. These definitions, however, do not provide specific information about what exactly is being planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated in the process of managing the curriculum. Hoadley, Christie and Ward (2009, p. 375) identify important school curriculum management variables that are linked to improved student outcomes. These include: regulation of time; monitoring and support for planning delivery in relation to curriculum coverage; the procurement and management of books and stationery; and the quality of tests and monitoring of results.

Curriculum management is defined by Stansbury and Huenecke (1973) as a process that is based on four points: (1) it involves the identification and establishment of goals; (2) it requires the formulation of a process to guide educational and instructional specialists (teachers) towards the attainment of the mentioned goals; (3) it is the establishment of managerial techniques to assist in the implementation of the identified process; and (4) it includes constant evaluation and re-evaluation of the validity of the identified goal, process and management techniques. However, Maringa (2016) posits that curriculum management includes planning, developing, monitoring and reviewing the educational programme of the school to ensure a match with school goals and appropriate allocation of resources. Furthermore, Hoadley et al. (2009) emphasise that curriculum management is about managing systems and procedures, as well as people, to ensure productive teaching and learning and to promote increased levels of learner achievement.

Khumalo (2014) observes that, in the last two decades, enormous pressure has been placed on the field of education to deliver improved student performance. In the United States, in particular, the *No Child Left Behind* legislation of 2000 includes accountability measures and hefty demands on managing the curriculum for effective teaching and learning. The trend in the last decade has been the linkage of specified management processes to the curriculum and the focus on instructional leadership (Graczewski, Knudson, & Holtzman, 2009; Tam, 2010).

School Principals are often challenged by the diverse roles which they have to play as managers of schools. Leadership in curriculum management is not only confined to the Principal, it is also delegated to the School Management Team (Deputy Principals, Heads of Departments) and teachers tasked with the academic programme of the school. This can only happen in an environment that promotes distributed school leadership and in a school system where everybody assumes collective responsibility. The school Principal is however a key figure around whom much of the school's activities revolve and therefore, to a great extent, he/she determines the school's success or failure with regards to the management of the curriculum. As an educational leader, he/she should lead the curriculum management function.

The school Principal, together with his/her School Management Team (SMT), has a crucial role to play in managing the school. The Principal has diverse duties to perform.

According to Portin, Shen and Williams (1998, p. 6), the role of the Principal deals, amongst other things, with budgeting, maintaining the school buildings and grounds, improving the instructional programme, working with staff to identify a vision and mission for the school and building a close relationship with the community.

School leadership is also responsible for the management of resources to support effective curriculum delivery. Inadequate textbooks, furniture, laboratories and classrooms may contribute to poor learner performance, particularly since the teacher may often be the only source of information for students who do not have resources for their independent study. The use of the learning resources can also be a challenge for teachers who are unqualified or under-qualified because they have weak content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge and the resources could be misused without serving their purpose of enhancing learning. Again, this is a curriculum management issue that needs to be addressed by Principals and SMTs. Another challenge associated with the management of LTSM is a lack of security measures in rural schools to protect the few resources the schools have, as these schools experience thefts and burglaries.

Collaborative model of instructional leadership

For a school to coordinate these key areas of curriculum management in schools successfully, Tienken (2010) proposes a Collaborative Model of Instructional Leadership. He believes that the Principal, as instructional leader, has to create a collaborative learning environment and shift away from the top-down management to a more distributed leadership. According to distributed leadership, the expertise of ensuring that quality teaching and learning takes place in a school does not reside only with the Principal but throughout a school in teachers, support staff and the School Management Team as a whole. The Collaborative Model of Instructional Leadership encourages consultative dialogues within the school to determine the needs of the learners and teachers and would then design appropriate teaching strategies to ensure that learning takes place. Tienken (2010) argues that leadership and professional knowledge must be disseminated in various platforms within the school, through the SMT and regular staff meetings.

Tienken (2010, p. 23) proposes that, when educators work collaboratively with one another, they are able to identify common gaps and plan teaching strategies that are responsive to the needs of the learners to improve learning. The Collaborative Model of Instructional Leadership may be used to ensure that systems and procedures in schools are well managed to promote teaching and learning that would increase the levels of learner achievement.

The Principal however remains the centre of all activities and ensures success in the school as an instructional leader. The Principal has the responsibility of creating an enabling environment for teaching as a key activity in the school and needs to create sustained conversations through regular meetings to ensure that all the teachers are

empowered to work towards the same goal. Strong instructional leadership combines pressure to perform, assistance and support so that the schools are enabled to move corporately toward accomplishing the learners' achievement goals, giving attention to important data, nurturing collaboration and building productive school environments (Tienken, 2010, p. 24).

South African studies

Limited research has been conducted on South African leadership, especially in studies that link the management processes to the curriculum. Hoadley et al. (2009) and Shoba (2009) note that the knowledge of how Principals manage the curriculum in South African schools is limited. Since the implementation of the post-apartheid curriculum, several empirical studies have focused on curriculum implementation (Labane, 2009) and on the role of the SMT in managing the curriculum (Shoba, 2009). Maphalala (2006) provides an overview of curriculum management issues in the context of curriculum change in South Africa. In Taylor's view, inefficient use of resources "is a central problem in South African schools and one which we know least about" (2007, p. 536). It would seem that the majority of South African Principals do not regard the oversight role relating to curriculum and teaching as their main task, but feel that responsibility for this lies with HoDs. Perhaps, as a consequence of this perception, Principals do not spend the majority of their time on aspects of instructional leadership but rather on administrative duties and learner discipline (Hoadley et al., 2009, p. 381).

The study by Hoadley et al. (2009) discovered that issues that adversely affect teaching and learning in schools include: low time-on-task and content exposure; poor curriculum coverage; low teacher-expectations; and insufficient use of textbooks. These deficiencies may be linked to the school leadership. Research suggests that there is a strong correlation between curriculum management and learner achievement in schools. Curriculum management is about managing systems and procedures, as well as people to ensure successful learning and teaching and to promote increasing levels of learner achievement (DoE, 2009). Research by Christie (2010, p. 696) confirms that "if schools are not competently managed, the primary task and central purpose of the school – teaching and learning – is likely to suffer." Hence, management needs to be actively engaged in curriculum coverage. A study by Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul and Armstrong (2011) observes that curriculum coverage is one key area of school functionality stemming from instructional leadership that could be more effectively monitored. Principals of schools requiring attention in this area could be required to report regularly on curriculum coverage.

The uneven state of curriculum delivery in South African schools highlights the need to conceptualise curriculum management variables at school level. One of these variables is the challenge of unqualified and under-qualified educators, as well as a high educator turnover in rural areas.

In 2016, KZN was found to have 2 875 teachers who were either unqualified or under-

qualified, the majority being in the rural areas and the deeply affected districts being Zululand, uThukela and King Cetshwayo (Savides, 2017). These teachers are sometimes referred to as “out-of-field” teachers (teaching a subject that teachers are under-qualified or even unqualified for). “Underqualified” refers to two categories: practising teachers who are university graduates practicing as teachers and experienced, but without professional teaching qualifications or teachers who may have both academic and professional teaching qualifications, but their qualifications may be viewed as inadequate due to curriculum or policy change (Mukeredzi, 2016). There can be no doubt that quality teaching is directly and negatively affected by large numbers of out-of-field, unqualified and underqualified teachers and this poses a particular problem for curriculum management. The Department of Education has been accused of not having proper up-to-date data of teacher profiles (qualifications and subjects) which informs demand and supply (Bernstein, 2015).

KZN is counted amongst the provinces with the highest number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers who may not be in a position to deliver curriculum content as expected. The strategy in place is for Subject Advisers to support unqualified teachers so that they can function optimally in their daily teaching activities, over and above the support they get from the School Management Team (SMT). Curriculum implementation is an ever-constant challenge, particularly in rural schools, and school managers are required to be proactive in managing change and educator development.

Curriculum management in KZN

In 2012, the KZN Department of Education developed its Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy (Department of Education, 2012, p. 8). In this process, the then MEC of Education in KZN, Mr E.S. Mchunu, conducted oversight visits to twelve education districts in the province “to assess progress with regard to implementation of the curriculum in schools.” What emerged from these visits was that KZN had no common and effective strategy for the monitoring of curriculum delivery across the twelve districts and no instrument designed to inform the system early enough of the extent to which learners are achieving learning objectives. The visits found that there was poor time on task; poor supervision and monitoring of curriculum implementation at the classroom level by the School Management Team; and a lack of content knowledge among teachers. To remedy this situation, the Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy was developed “to standardize the approach and to promote uniformity in curriculum implementation and support in the province”, in the hope that “a common strategy that will compel schools to make use of each and every minute of teaching time effectively.” Three of the six elements that guide the KZN strategy are:

- Supervising the taught curriculum at classroom level
- Monitoring and evaluating the curriculum implementation
- Providing support services and resources to teachers.

The recognition that poor curriculum management contributes to poor learning outcomes was the starting point of the partnership between the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the Programme for Improving Learner Outcomes (PILO) in the development of the Jika iMfundo initiative. Jika iMfundo is a campaign of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education that has been piloted on scale in 2015–7 in two districts, King Cetshwayo and Pinetown, so that the model is tested on scale and lessons are learned before rollout across the province from 2018. The implementation of Jika iMfundo is supported by the Programme to Improve Learning Outcomes (PILO) and funded by the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT).

The management focus is on all Circuit Managers and Subject Advisers at district level and at all the School Management Teams at school level. The teacher focus is on providing curriculum support materials to teachers from Grades 1–12 (languages, maths and science). It seeks to provide district officials, teachers and School Management Teams with the tools and training needed to have professional, supportive, conversations about curriculum coverage based on evidence so that problems of curriculum coverage are identified and solved and learning outcomes improve across the system. It achieves this with a set of interventions at school and district levels, from foundation phase to FET phase, which provide tools and training to build routines and patterns of support within and to schools that will have a long-term and sustained impact on learning outcomes.

Teachers are provided with CAPS Planners and Trackers which assist them to plan teaching and assessment, track the pace of teaching and assessment against CAPS expectations, reflect and identify pedagogical problems related to coverage and to report these to the HoD in a professional and supportive climate so that problems can be identified and solutions collaboratively agreed upon.

Heads of Department are provided with the tools and training to supervise and support teachers in curriculum coverage. Principals are provided with tools and training to monitor and support HoDs in their curriculum management responsibilities.

Circuit Managers and Subject advisers are given tools and training to have curriculum-focused conversations with educators that use the evidence gathered in the school so that problems can be identified and solutions found.

Research methodology

Research approach

This study was designed to reveal how the management of selected schools in King Cetshwayo district understands the task of curriculum management following the Jika iMfundo intervention and what steps they have taken in response to Jika iMfundo as an operational system of curriculum management. Our research approach was qualitative, in line with Maree's (2007) notion that qualitative research may be viewed as an inquiry process of understanding where a researcher develops a complex, holistic picture,

analyses words and reports on detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

Specifically, the project sought to gather participants' views in response to the following questions:

- What has been the impact of Jika iMfundo Programme on curriculum management to improve the quality of teaching and learning in King Cetshwayo District?
- How do school Principals involved in Jika iMfundo Programme understand their roles as curriculum leaders?
- Does the school leadership know about actual curriculum coverage in their schools?
- What do participants say about the nature of curriculum planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation after the Jika iMfundo intervention programme?
- What do teachers say about the kind of supervision and support they receive to sustain the Jika iMfundo programme pillars?

The study targeted eight primary schools which were involved in the Jika iMfundo programme in the King Cetshwayo District. A purposive sampling procedure was used to identify schools according to the Jika iMfundo colour codes: green, amber and red. Eight schools were chosen, according to the Jika iMfundo colour code classification of schools, three "green" schools (schools that are classified by the district as working well), three "amber" schools (schools that are progressing gradually) and two "red" schools (schools that are not progressing much).

The study involved eight Principals, four Deputy Principals, 11 Heads of Departments and 16 teachers as participants. The table below provides a breakdown of participants in terms of schools' "colour coding" and positions/post-levels. In total, 39 participants were involved in the study. The aim was to get as much information as possible from diverse participants in order to triangulate information later for validity and reliability purposes.

Number of Schools per Colour Code	Principals	No. of Deputy Principals	No. of HoDs	No. of Teachers
3 Green schools	3	2	4	6
3 Amber schools	3	1	4	6
2 Red schools	2	1	3	4
8	8	4	11	16

Colour code classification of participating schools

Data Sources

This study used a variety of data sources to determine participants' perceptions of the Jika iMfundo programme in managing the school curriculum. Data were collected

through separate focus group interviews with Principals, Deputy Principals, HoDs and teachers and documentary analysis was also undertaken. To achieve a measure of triangulation and for validation, we cross verified information received through interviews and document analysis.

Focus group discussions

Four focus group sessions were conducted by the research team as follows:

- Group 1: Eight Principals and four Deputy Principals
- Group 2: 11 HoDs
- Group 3: Eight teachers
- Group 4: Eight teachers.

Teachers who taught mathematics, sciences and languages formed part of the study as the Jika iMfundo programme focuses on these subjects. The focus group discussions were conducted in a research workshop format that took the form of a dialogue. Since dialogue is more spontaneous than more formal ways of interaction, the assumption was that it would generate more profound, naturally occurring data (Silverman, 2001, pp. 286–287). The researcher posed pre-defined open-ended questions which the group responded to, as would be the case in a semi-structured focus group interview. However, the participants were given considerable freedom to explore topics beyond the questions posed by the researcher. The entire workshop was tape-recorded for analysis at a later stage. Rubin and Rubin (as cited in Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 33) suggest that discussions are a way of uncovering and exploring the meanings that underpin people's lives, routines, behaviours and feelings. The focus group discussions served the purpose of explaining contextual variables that were operating in the school system that impacted on the curriculum delivery. These contextual variables shed light on the actions of various stakeholders, their interrelationships, successes and challenges within the school system. Quotations cited from focus group discussions are used as a source of triangulation.

While we specifically chose focus group methodology to generate discussion and allow participants the freedom to raise issues of their own, we recognise that this methodology does not enable individual views to be probed in depth or in detail.

Document analysis

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around the phenomenon under investigation. Analysing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to the way that focus group or interview transcripts are analysed (Bowen, 2009). In this study, various types of school documents were analysed that included: teachers' files; lesson plans; year plans and timetables; meeting agenda; trackers; workbooks; CAPS documents; minutes of the meetings; and reports as sources

of information that revealed insights into the curriculum delivery and management. The insights gleaned from the documents related to areas of curriculum planning; content coverage; pacing of learning; Jika iMfundo strengths and weaknesses; school routines; curriculum support; monitoring; and evaluation.

Site visits

Four schools were visited by the research team. Site visits were intended to reveal the actual context in which the curriculum is designed and delivered in a school system. The research team had to observe the school premises, playgrounds, restrooms, offices and classrooms in order to comprehend the conditions under which teachers and learners operated in these schools. Site visits were conducted in two “red” colour coded schools to deepen the understanding of their challenges in context. These were informal observations that served to familiarise the research team with the schools in the context of the Jika iMfundo intervention, given that interviews were not conducted in schools but at a central venue.

Analysis of data

Qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis. Recorded interviews were subsequently transcribed and analysed according to the phenomenological steps in the analytical frameworks of Giorgi, Fisher and Murray (1975), where we:

1. read each transcript to get an overall sense of the whole
2. re-read the transcripts and identified transactions in the experience (each transition signifying a separate unit of meaning)
3. eliminated redundancies in the units of meaning and began to relate the remaining units to one another
4. transformed the participants’ language into the language of science
5. synthesised the insights into a description of the entire experience of leadership practices.

After the transcriptions and interpretation of data was done, responses were arranged according to each question asked and for each category of participants. Researchers (team members) were encouraged to print the arranged responses in order to analyse them using the analytical frameworks of Giorgi et al. (1975) discussed above.

Ethical considerations

Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy were respected. The participants were assured that they would remain anonymous regardless of the information they would have provided. The consent of all participants was sought. The purpose of this research was clearly explained to the participants and they were informed that they had a right to withdraw from the research at any point and their data would then be excluded from the report. Permission from the District Education Department and the schools was

sought. Informant feedback/member checking was held with the participants where feedback was provided both to verify data analysis and to comment on its meaning and interpretation. Draft reports were provided to the participating schools to verify the research findings. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was sought from the University of Zululand.

Findings and discussion

Attitudes towards Jika iMfundo

In focus group interviews, enthusiasm for Jika iMfundo was clear. Broadly speaking, teachers reported that they enjoyed working with the toolkits and other resources provided to them. Discussions suggested that Jika iMfundo had broadened the teachers' and SMTs' knowledge on how to *plan, implement and monitor* the curriculum through the use of tools to ensure content coverage towards more effective teaching and learning. Discussions also suggested that Jika iMfundo has, for the first time, brought about uniformity, synchronisation and streamlining of curriculum management within schools, circuits and the district. Mention was made of improved stability and better relations amongst some teachers and SMT members; greater clarity on the roles of SMTs and teachers; reducing role ambiguity and providing role clarity; and teacher development in relation to refocusing teachers on teaching and learning (T&L) to assist learners. Issues of effective curriculum management and improving the leadership capabilities of Principals were also raised. Jika iMfundo's approach to evidence-based approaches and accountability was endorsed, with participants noting that everyone was able to monitor their own work and take corrective action. If an individual lagged behind, they would be able to seek and access support from colleagues. The collaborative nature of Jika iMfundo meant that no individual could succeed working alone and that the monitoring system required cooperation amongst colleagues.

The enthusiastic response to the Jika iMfundo intervention evident in focus group discussions did not however mean that teachers had the same interpretations of the programme. To some participants, it signalled "movement" from one place to another; to some, a "transition"; and to others, a "change". One participant equated it to a "*fast car*". Generally, it was seen as a way of transforming education for the better, in a sense, representing a paradigm shift in managing schools and particularly the curriculum.

A common remark from participants was that Jika iMfundo helped them to deal with CAPS. In particular, it was seen as a programme that brought a practical approach to the implementation of CAPS. One participant revealed that, prior to her participation in Jika iMfundo, she could not understand CAPS documents. This participant said that Jika iMfundo is "*a document that unpacks CAPS*". Another participant said that it "*eases the burden of CAPS*" and "*cut it into pieces*". Yet another participant saw it as a document that "*makes the process of teaching and learning easy*" and other pointed out that it was "*there to rectify CAPS*". From these participants' views, it seems that Jika iMfundo has

offered solutions to at least some of the curriculum problems they were experiencing. It was said that even experienced teachers sometimes struggled to unpack the curriculum and teach all the content or topics they were expected to teach, partly due to the number of topics that need to be covered in a year or the bulkiness of the curriculum and the teachers' lack of content knowledge.

However, there were a few participants who believed that *Jika iMfundo* was another curriculum statement different from CAPS. One participant pointed out that "*Jika iMfundo means that we are changing from one system of education to another*". To those who compared it with CAPS, *Jika iMfundo* was seen as a better programme than CAPS.

Curriculum planning and coverage

In previous sections, we have pointed out the critical role that curriculum planning at various levels has on the achievement of curriculum coverage. Most participants in the different focus groups agreed that, before *Jika iMfundo*, there was no proper curriculum planning. Time on task is also very important in a curriculum delivery and management environment. Allocated time available for teaching and learning needs to be planned for and used effectively. It is for this reason that the school must have a timetable which is followed by all teachers. Allocated time also requires that teachers and learners are always punctual for the task of teaching and learning. It also requires that the support of schools by the district and head office must be timely. Teachers, as well as HoDs and SMT members all commented on how the *Jika iMfundo* initiative assisted them with curriculum planning and coverage, including time allocation.

Views expressed by teachers

The majority of teachers were of the view that *Jika iMfundo* has introduced better curriculum planning which had a positive impact on teaching and learning. They noted that, as a result of participating in the *Jika iMfundo* programme, the behaviour of teachers had changed, in that they were conscious of the importance of being ready and prepared for lessons. They attributed their readiness and preparedness to "*clear instructions*", "*uniformity*", and "*ready-made lesson planning*" which saved them time on planning and made teachers focus more on "*time on task*".

It would appear that, before the introduction of *Jika iMfundo*, curriculum implementation was left to individual teachers to decide. In the words of one participant: "*I used to start with any topic I was comfortable with.*" Another stated that teaching "*was led by feelings and there was no clear direction.*"

In discussions, it emerged clearly that teachers had struggled with time management and had not necessarily understood the importance of following the school timetable to ensure curriculum coverage. According to one of the teachers, "*In the past I used to begin the day with whatever I feel like teaching but now I stick to the timetable because I now understand its importance and I'm always prepared for everything I need to teach on a given date, because we have a lesson plan designed for us.*" Furthermore, a number of teachers

expressed appreciation of the fact that they now understood the importance of being organised and of using teaching and support material to facilitate the understanding of the content by learners.

Several teachers stated that they felt more confident as a result of training workshops and supportive tools. One teacher explained: *“In the past I did not know how to teach guided reading, after the workshop and tools offered by Jika iMfundo, I now do it with confidence.”* Another teacher added that, in the past, *“I used to overlook speaking and listening skills as I did not know how to teach them, now I know.”* Foundation Phase teachers mentioned that they felt better able to cover all the topics in the curriculum because of the support they received from HoDs and from Jika iMfundo facilitators.

That said, concerns were expressed about the time that Jika iMfundo required of them, forcing them to spend more time on planning rather than teaching. For instance, one teacher commented as follows: *“To me, Jika iMfundo has a lot of work in a short space of time. As the colleagues have said, it is difficult for the slow learners, it is a fast car.”* This teacher felt that more time in administrative work took time away from teaching. There was too much paper work and teachers were therefore no different from the administrative staff. Teachers tended to spend most of their time on lesson planning, assessment activities and marking. There is no doubt that even teachers, who were supportive of the Jika iMfundo tools, experienced time pressures. As one stated, *“No, there is no time, but we always create some time because we don’t want just to move forward. You manipulate the time somehow.”*

A number of teachers expressed their appreciation for the guided lesson resources and tools. One of the teachers noted that:

Jika iMfundo puts you straight to the point when it comes to curriculum delivery. It is properly planned, no unnecessary divert. Assessment is there and clear. We use them as is. But also, it depends on the level of your learners, as a teacher, you could change [it] here and there.

Views expressed by HoDs

In the focus group interview with HoDs, it became clear that they believed that curriculum coverage had improved as a result of better planning. Not only teachers, but also SMT members and particularly HoDs, talked of “curriculum coverage” as their end goal. They also mentioned that Jika iMfundo helped them to manage curriculum coverage better, particularly through the use of the curriculum management tools provided by Jika iMfundo. Using the tools made planning easier for HoDs, particularly with regard to scheduling times for meetings with teachers to discuss progress and challenges with regard to curriculum implementation. The tools also appear to have brought about improved communication through formalising tasks. The Planner and Tracker tools helped the HoDs to work collaboratively with teachers in a number of issues, including class visits, topics to be covered in class and the number of prescribed

assessments, thus minimising clashes in as far as working relations are concerned. HoDs were also provided with guidelines as to how to conduct one-on-one sessions with teachers. HoD tools helped them track, not only teachers, but also learners' work to check if what the teacher indicated as completed in the tracker was indeed done in class. One HoD confirmed as follows: *"I now know what to track and how to track it."*

All HoDs maintained that they now had tools for almost everything that happened in a classroom environment. One HoD said: *"Now we know how to have [a] professional conversation, we know what is expected of us, in fact, everybody know[s], there is a great deal of transparency."* According to this participant, HoDs were now equipped with skills that helped them to be able to track the curriculum, remarking that: *"When I check teachers' and learners' work, I know exactly what I'm looking for."* Another stated: *"The materials tell you how are you going to visit the teachers, how to do one-on-one conversation, what are you expected to ask the educators."*

One of the participants who had twenty years' teaching experience, five of those as the HoD, said that she now understood that planning is key. She noted that *"we now plan as a team and share ideas on what we want to achieve as a phase."* She had come to regard teamwork as a contributory factor to effective planning. Another HoD stated: *"We sit down, do the planning with the teachers and the due dates and they submit to the HoDs."*

Commenting on the usefulness of formal lesson plans and materials, one of the HoDs said that *"we saw it as good thing because, as you know, teachers are very lazy to make lesson plans. Teachers are happy, they know what they are going to do today, tomorrow and on and on."*

Similarly, one of the Principals expressed the view that teachers now had more time to sit as teams or groups and discuss exactly how to teach and assess a particular topic and brainstorm ideas. He stated that *"the ready-made lesson plans tell them what to teach and this leads to them covering the curriculum because one thing that make learners to fail due to curriculum that was to covered."*

It would appear that the information collected through tools such as the Planner and Tracker helped the SMT as a whole to be aware of challenges faced by teachers as soon as possible, as they collected trackers every Friday. This meant that problems did not pile up and, as a result, the turnaround time to solve the problems became shorter.

Comments on teacher reflections

A teacher noted,

What I like with Jika iMfundo is that the officials told us that we can divert from the tracker if we see that it is not assisting, but explain the reason on your reflection. We are allowed to do that by explain[ing] when and how you are going to fix that challenge, hence there are classes. At the same time, at foundation phase, morning and extra classes are not allowed, it is difficult.

A HoD added,

As HoD we have to make sure that we assist the teacher by making sure they write the reflection at the end. Thereafter we need to read and discuss these reflections. We then have a one-on-one conversation because maybe it is the way of presentation on teachers' side. He/she should change the way of presentation. Sometimes the problem is on the learners' side.

A Principal offered this perspective:

Jika iMfundo emphasises on reflection of the practice. As management, we also do reflection since there are tools that we get from the workshop. On your reflection, you will know what and why you have not achieved the target and will know how you will achieve it next time.

Evidence indicates that teachers and HoDs believed that management of curriculum coverage has improved. The Jika iMfundo tools provide clear processes for planning, design, reporting and recording, and teaching assessment. Even though teachers mentioned feeling burdened with paper work and administrative work, they also mentioned that they were able to work smarter and more efficiently. Through scheduled formative assessment tasks, including teacher observation and teacher-learner interactions, teachers were provided with tools to enable them to monitor learners' progress and enhance learning.

Curriculum monitoring

As mentioned earlier, monitoring is a critical element of curriculum management. Its functions are to track teaching and learning processes toward the realisation of stated objectives and also to enable corrective measures to be put in place. Ideally, formalised monitoring should increase a sense of accountability amongst both teachers and management.

Curriculum monitoring is at the heart of what SMT members are responsible for, especially the HoDs, as they are first in line in the School Management Team. They currently use standardised monitoring tools whilst, in the past, teachers used their own non-standardised tools and they were not equipped on how to monitor curriculum coverage. One HoD revealed that *"in the past, I did not know how to check properly if teachers were doing their work."* Furthermore, participants complained that they did not know what to check for when monitoring the curriculum. According to this participant, HoDs, as the first in line when it comes to curriculum coverage, were not empowered, noting that *"all I could think about was criticisms one used to get from inspectors, when they came for curriculum monitoring."* Another one echoed that they now felt empowered by the intervention. From the participants' responses, one can conclude that HoDs, in the past,

did not monitor curriculum coverage properly as they did not have the skills, knowledge and tools to do that.

One HoD expressed: *"I collect trackers every Friday, conduct class visits and check exercise books for the learners and will take the recording to the Principal or Deputy Principal."*^{**} There are weekly meetings held by the SMT in this school that did not happen in the past. HoDs were also able to plan for teamwork: *"In the Foundation Phase, we finish work at 13h00 and we, as the educators, sit together and help each other up until 14h00 and we do that on a daily basis."*

Focus group discussions showed an awareness of curriculum management as an extended process running through the school from teachers, to HoDs, to deputies and Principals and beyond the school to the district. HoDs were mindful of the fact that the feedback they were given by teachers was not only for their own consumption, but would also be taken up to the Deputy Principal and the Principal, as part of reporting, and from there to district officials. They also showed an understanding of the importance of record keeping and writing reports on the successes and challenges facing them in different phases. All-in-all, they felt that they had increased confidence in their ability to discharge their duties as required or expected. It also became clear from this research that SMT members, and particularly HoDs, had a deeper insight as to their roles in school.

While it is not possible to generalise from such a small sample of schools, it would appear that, in the case of these schools, participants consider that *Jika iMfundo* has reinstated accountability which had been eroded within the education system. The standardised tools and the use of evidence-based discussions with teachers brings transparency to the relationships between teachers and HoDs. In the monitoring process, teachers report what they have done to HoDs and HoDs are able to verify, through a number of documents, whether teaching and learning does take place. They are able to focus on the quality of the work covered in relation to CAPS and not just quantity i.e. the number of activities learners have in their exercise books. It also helps them to follow up on areas where teachers have indicated in the tracker that they need assistance. HoDs have the opportunity to make sure that those aspects are addressed, either by teachers within the grade/phase or by external help which could be in the form of colleagues from neighbouring schools. Through the use of more regularised conversations, *"the discussion is professional and never personal."*

In the words of one of the Principals, *"these tools make it easy to track where the educator on how he/she is doing. We are able to sit down as SMT and manage the curriculum, what is the downfall, what is challenging and how to overcome."* Another Principal pointed out,

The one-on-one meeting with the educator, it's when you reflect back on what transpired when you were having class visits ... We are able to give advice and the teacher will tell why it is not the way it was expected. At the same time, you can offer support because immediately you can identify challenges. It improves relations among us as staff.

Moderation tools were also mentioned to be useful in evaluating the reliability of evidence provided by teachers pertaining to teaching and learning. Teachers, SMTs and district officials indicated that moderation tools are user friendly and accessible to all role functionaries in schools.

In the schools in this sample, it would seem that the relationships between teachers, Principals and district officials have changed for the better, through greater role clarity and that the common stated purpose of curriculum coverage has improved. It would appear that tools have enabled relationships to be more regularised and to be more supportive than in the past. A HoD described this:

The visits by the district officials are guided by the monitoring tool rather than perceptions and the process is developmental rather than judgemental and works less on issues of compliance.

Challenges encountered by schools in dealing with Jika iMfundo

CAPS vs Jika iMfundo?

Researchers noticed that participants often mentioned CAPS and Jika iMfundo as two programmes being implemented at school concurrently. A Principal explained: *“What I noticed is that colleagues thought it was a change of the curriculum altogether. They said we had NCS, CAPS and now Jika iMfundo was a new curriculum, not the way of implementing the curriculum as it is.”* Another stated: *“We were confused because we were still looking at CAPS documents, teachers thought Jika iMfundo was another programme but, at the end, it was clear that this programme was there to rectify CAPS.”*

One of the HoDs clarified the relationship as follows:

Jika iMfundo has come with improvement, for example, I used to compare NCS with Jika iMfundo, NCS is general and that Jika iMfundo is specific. Looking at the timetable of NCS, it does not tell you when to teach. For example, Jika iMfundo there are language components and there is reading, group guided reading and writing. When you go to NCS, it doesn't tell you clearly that today you are going to teach reading. That is why we have children that do not know how to write because teachers were doing what they like to teach and there was no document which tell them that 'today you have to teach this'.

Another said:

Before we go on seeing that Jika iMfundo explain when and how to do what, it specifies, but to me, even NCS tell us the same. No NCS is not on detail, it only tells you per term you have to cover this, but with Jika iMfundo it tells you day-to-day for the whole week what you are going to do, what are the resources to use,

what to assess. It tells you even day 1, day 2 what to assess.

The distinctions between CAPS and Jika iMfundo could have been discussed with all the schools taking part during the inductions and the road shows which were provided in preparation for implementation.

Challenges related to CAPS

A common remark from participants was that they could not keep up with the pace of Jika iMfundo due to the number of activities that had to be done on a given day. One participant revealed that she could not teach all the activities and support the learners, especially the slow learners, at a same time. There was not enough time for proper teaching and individual support was not possible. This participant revealed that *“there are too many activities per day, especially in isiZulu, in a limited time but we try to squeeze the activities together.”* Another participant said that there was too much work for both teachers and learners: *“We are expected to use both the workbook and exercise book. For teachers, that calls for too much marking.”* Another participant said that not all the learners had learning material: *“Most of them don’t have material like exercise books, pens and pencil as they lose them on daily basis, so they sometimes don’t write class work and homework.”* Yet another participant said: *“Jika iMfundo focuses on speed rather than quality, the tracker leads and not the child. Tracker is a like a robot, it opens and closes.”*

Participants confirmed that some learners could not keep up with the content covered in class and struggled with different topics in the curriculum. One of topics mentioned was “phonics in isiZulu”. From findings, it is clear that teachers struggled with content or curriculum coverage and learners who were not able to keep up with content.

The other problem highlighted by participants is the challenge of not recording their lesson coverage on time because they would still be dealing with slow learners. One participant said: *“... not that we are not teaching.”* Another participant confirmed that, at the end, they finished the syllabus as required: *“We are slow but, at the end, we cover everything.”* From what teachers are saying, the problem is not that they were not recording, it is just that they were not covering the curriculum. They also tried to catch up by having afternoon classes, especially in the Foundation Phase, from 13h30 to 14h30.

The other problem identified by teachers is the difficulty related to reflection on their work. Some teachers felt there was no need for reflection. One of the teacher said: *“I don’t understand why we need to reflect after each and every lesson.”*

Another of the challenges of Jika iMfundo, as seen by the teachers, is that trackers need to be aligned with the school calendar. For instance, a tracker may indicate five days of activities in a particular week, only to find that there are three school days in that week. That results in a backlog for both teachers and learners. The other challenge is that of the shortage of resources like workbooks, especially in rural schools, and when this is coupled by the lack of electricity, then no printing can be done to supplement the

material. The usage of both workbooks and exercise books was not a welcome move for some of the teachers as they felt that it required a lot from them in terms of marking and, as far as they were concerned, this represented a duplication of activities.

Location of the school and lack of parental involvement

The themes that arose from focus group discussions were the effect that the location of the school had on its functionality and, specifically, the socio-economic context of a particular community as the schools from quintile one were attracting students from families that were struggling financially.

A closely related theme that participants mentioned was the lack of parental involvement in their children's education. It is clear that there is a relationship between the location of the school and parental involvement. According to the teachers, the curriculum that is in place requires active involvement of parents and guardians as they are expected to help learners especially with homework. If learners are not helped at home, it becomes a problem for the teachers as they have to start from the previous day's work which was supposed to be done with the help of parents at home. Another point raised was that of parents who are not literate thus they cannot help their children. Other challenges were that learners may come from child-headed families and that some live with their uneducated grandparents who cannot help with the school work. Teachers also indicated that they needed skills on how to deal with parents of slow learners because they did not want to be told that their children were under-performing.

The KZN Curriculum Management and Delivery Strategy (2012, p. 23) also identified *“strong parent and community support [as] one of the key factors for effective teaching and learning.”* We may well extend the argument by Christie (2010) that *“situated approaches”* are needed when dealing with schools because different schools face different/unique situations that affect the day-to-day running of a school at the core of which lies teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The research, on which this chapter is based, sought to investigate the theme of curriculum management and, more specifically, the views of participants in a sample of rural schools in the King Cetshwayo District on the impact of the Jika iMfundo intervention to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Noting that curriculum management entails planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and that curriculum leadership needs to spread from the Principal to HoDs and the support they give to teachers, we set up focus group sessions for a sample of Principals and Deputies, HoDs and teachers in eight schools to gather information on these themes. While our sample is too small to allow for broad generalisation, the contextual insights offered by the research provide valuable perspectives on the operation of the early phase of Jika iMfundo in a rural district of KZN. We recognise also that, while the focus group methodology we used has benefits in eliciting free-ranging views, it is stronger

in showing common themes and concerns than in providing deeply-probed individual views. The individual views we have presented were gathered in the context of focus group conversations, not individual interviews. Our findings need to be interpreted in this light in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology.

Our findings show the generally positive response of teachers, HoDs and Principals to the systematic approach to curriculum coverage that Jika iMfundo brought into schools. Indeed, responses suggest that, prior to this, there was little systematic curriculum planning in these schools, with teachers often making individual choices about what to teach and when. The introduction of planners and trackers, as hands-on guides to planning and recording curriculum coverage, meant very practical assistance to teachers in planning and monitoring their coverage of the CAPS curriculum. This is not to say that the use of Jika iMfundo tools was always unproblematic as some teachers were unclear about the relationship between CAPS and Jika iMfundo; the tools added an administrative dimension that some teachers felt took time away from actual teaching; reflection tasks were not always considered to be valuable; and contexts of poverty were seen to have real effects on the functionality of these schools. Importantly, while the Jika iMfundo tools could assist with planning CAPS coverage, many teachers expressed continued unhappiness with the pace of teaching that curriculum coverage required, particularly in classes of mixed competence and what they termed “slow learners”.

Turning to curriculum monitoring, our research suggests that the Jika iMfundo tools for HoDs introduced a more structured approach to their work with teachers. Many HoDs said that they knew, for the first time, what their role entailed and how to engage with staff in evidence-based discussions. There is more transparency about what is required and more opportunity to work collaboratively. Principals also mentioned the regularisation of tasks through the tools in positive terms. Thus, our research tentatively suggests that the Jika iMfundo intervention has been able to improve relationships within the sample schools, perhaps restoring the authority relationships that are necessary for schools to focus on teaching and learning.

The aim of the Jika iMfundo programme is to develop strong curriculum management skills for the support and implementation of the curriculum by teachers, HoDs, SMTs and Principals. The reports from teachers who participated in this research study indicated that Jika iMfundo has come at the right time.

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