CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING FACED BY GRADE 12 RURAL SCHOOL TEACHERS AT DZONDO CIRCUIT IN VHEMBE DISTRICT

by

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… is my original work and has not previously been submitted to this or any other institution of higher education. I further declare that all sources cited are indicated and acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of references.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents, whose endless love, support, and encouragement have been my greatest strength.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr SL Tshikota, for his guidance and support throughout this research. I also thank my family and friends for their encouragement, and the University of Venḓa for providing the resources needed to complete this study.

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ABSTRACT

Rural secondary schooling in South Africa often operates under conditions that differ from those assumed by national curriculum expectations, particularly at the Grade 12 level, where learner performance is closely monitored. Teachers in rural schools work within environments characterised by constrained resources, uneven institutional support and limited continuity between school and community learning contexts. While these challenges are commonly discussed individually, less attention has been given to how they interact to shape classroom practice. This study investigated the challenges faced by Grade 12 teachers in rural schools in Dzondo Circuit of Vhembe District. An interpretivist paradigm and theoretical framework of constructivism helped in the qualitative case study design to explore the lived experiences of the participants to understand how the conditions of context influence teaching and learning. Constructivist framework was appropriate because it recognizes learning to be a dynamic process that is informed by the interaction within the classroom, language, context and interactions between learners and their environment. The data was gathered based on face-to-face semi-structured interviews with fourteen purposely chosen participants which comprised of ten Grade 12 teachers and four Grade 12 learners in four rural secondary schools in Dzando Circuit. The data were thematically analysed to determine the similarity of patterns, meanings and experiences as far as teaching and learning dilemmas are concerned in the selected rural schools. The findings show that teaching and learning difficulties are not isolated classroom problems but the result of interacting structural, institutional and socio-cultural conditions. Resource availability, classroom organisation, community attitudes and language mediation collectively influence learner participation and instructional practice. Consequently, teaching shifts from curriculum facilitation to management of contextual constraints, and learner engagement reflects perceived educational value as much as pedagogical clarity. The study backs up previous studies that have found that rural schools are not only short, but they are also overcrowded and lack parental involvement and professional support. However, what it does provide at first, is that these issues in the Dzondo Circuit converge to affect Grade 12 teaching and learning. As demonstrated in the research, the issues of the teachers are not as simple

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as classroom problems, but they are systemic problems, which are interdependent because of the school conditions, community environment, background and language mediation of learners. Considering constructivism meaning the results suggest that the involvement of the learners will be dependent on the quality of the interaction, the mediation of language, the learning materials and the classroom support offered to the learners. Students in overcrowded classes and with limited home support or teachers with limited resources are less likely to actively construct knowledge through discussion, practice, feedback and collaboration. Therefore, the problems identified in the course of the research have not merely an impact on access to education but also the experiences of learning in the classroom.

Keywords: Rural Schools, Teaching and Learning, Challenges, Strategies, Educational Equity

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DBE	:	Department of Basic Education
DoE	:	Department of Education
LoLT	:	Language of Learning and Teaching
NSC	:	National Senior Certificate
SGB	:	School Governing Body
SMTs	:	Senior Management Teams
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Rural education remains a significant concern in South Africa, particularly in communities where schools operate under socio-economic and infrastructural constraints. Within Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, Dzondo Circuit represents a rural schooling context characterised by limited educational resources, uneven institutional support, and socio-economic conditions that shape teaching and learning processes. Teachers in these schools are required to implement the same curriculum standards as those expected nationally while working in materially constrained environments.

Studies on rural schooling indicate that shortages of teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate infrastructure influence instructional practices and learner participation. Ndlovu and Makaye (2020) observe that rural teachers are expected to achieve similar academic outcomes as urban schools despite limited support structures. Matodzi (2022) similarly notes that large class sizes and insufficient resources restrict individual learner support and complicate classroom management. These conditions affect lesson preparation, assessment practices, and the pace of curriculum coverage.

In addition to resource limitations, rural schools often struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers. Chauke and Motsei (2021) report that professional isolation and limited career development opportunities discourage teachers from remaining in rural schools, thereby contributing to instability in curriculum delivery. Mkhize and Yacoob (2020) further indicate that inadequate institutional support reduces teacher motivation and the continuity of instruction, particularly at exit levels such as Grade 12.

School infrastructure and access to technology also shape the teaching environment. Jacobs and Isaacs (2020) identify persistent shortages of reliable electricity, classroom

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facilities, and learning spaces in some rural schools. The absence of digital resources and internet connectivity limits opportunities for technology-assisted teaching and learning (Vilakazi & Pather, 2020; Maruping & Velempini, 2020). Such conditions influence both instructional strategies and learner engagement.

Community context forms an additional dimension of rural schooling. Parental involvement contributes positively to learner discipline and academic effort (Ndebele & Samson, 2021), yet economic hardship, unemployment, and low education levels in rural communities often restrict active participation (Moyo & Modiba, 2020). Consequently, teachers assume responsibilities that extend beyond classroom instruction, including learner motivation and academic support.

Within Vhembe District, these structural and social factors interact with the linguistic environment in which schooling occurs. Although English is the official Language of Learning and Teaching in Grade 12, most teachers and learners communicate primarily in Tshivenḓa outside formal instruction. Teaching, therefore, frequently involves informal mediation of concepts across languages to support learner understanding. This multilingual classroom environment forms part of the contextual conditions shaping teaching practice rather than the central focus of the study.

Grade 12 teachers in Dzondo Circuit are expected to prepare learners for high-stakes national examinations while operating within these combined contextual constraints. Understanding how these conditions influence classroom practice is essential for interpreting teaching and learning challenges in rural settings.

This study, therefore, investigated the challenges experienced by Grade 12 teachers in rural schools of Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District.

Although the study was framed around challenges, the investigation did not treat these as isolated difficulties experienced by individual teachers. Rather, the study examined how these challenges emerge from the interaction between classroom conditions,

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institutional structures and community contexts. The term “challenges” is therefore used analytically to refer to systemic constraints influencing teaching and learning rather than discrete classroom problems.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study focused on the challenges encountered by Grade 12 teachers in four rural schools in Dzondo Circuit of Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. Rural schools in this district operate within socio-economic conditions that differ significantly from urban schooling contexts. Previous observations indicate that teachers in these settings experience shortages of teaching materials, limited parental involvement, and inadequate institutional support. While these conditions are widely acknowledged, the manner in which they shape the teaching and learning process in Grade 12 classrooms remains insufficiently understood.

Limited teaching materials and multi-grade teaching structures often overburden teachers and reduce the time available for effective instruction, particularly in exit-level grades. Although South Africa has a considerable number of qualified teachers, rural schools continue to struggle to attract and retain them. The problem is therefore not a national shortage of teachers, but the reluctance of qualified teachers to accept rural placements. The absence of stable staffing disrupts curriculum continuity and weakens instructional quality. Furthermore, insufficient professional development and support from key stakeholders, including the Department of Education (DoE), School Governing Bodies (SGB), and School Management Teams (SMT), intensify these challenges and limit teachers’ capacity to deliver quality education.

Empirical studies in Vhembe District confirm the persistence of these difficulties. Ndlovu and Makaye (2020) observe that professional frustration among rural teachers results largely from the expectation to achieve the same curriculum outcomes as urban schools without comparable institutional backing. Under-resourced environments affect lesson preparation, learner assessment, and classroom interaction. Matodzi (2022) further notes that overcrowded classrooms and insufficient resources make individual learner support

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difficult. Raselekoane and Ndou (2023) argue that contextual challenges affecting rural schools remain largely invisible in accountability frameworks. Consequently, the difficulties experienced by teachers in Dzondo Circuit cannot be attributed to individual competence alone but reflect broader systemic inequalities within rural schooling.

Teacher allocation and job security further complicate the situation. Chauke and Motsei (2021) indicate that qualified teachers often leave rural schools due to career stagnation and professional isolation, leading to instability in curriculum coverage, particularly in Grade 12. Mkhize and Yacoob (2020) similarly report that weak institutional support discourages experienced teachers from remaining in rural schools. As a result, less experienced teachers are often required to manage complex curricula without adequate guidance. Raselekoane and Ndou (2023) add that Grade 12 teachers carry disproportionate academic accountability, as learner performance is closely scrutinised while contextual limitations remain overlooked. This creates an imbalance between expectations and available support.

The problem is compounded by limited parental and community involvement. Ndebele and Samson (2021) emphasise that parental participation improves learner discipline, homework completion, and academic engagement, yet socio-economic hardships in rural communities restrict such involvement. Moyo and Modiba (2020) attribute weak community collaboration to poverty, unemployment, and low education levels. These factors reduce the support available to teachers and expand their responsibilities beyond classroom instruction. Professional development programmes also remain ineffective when they fail to address the realities of rural teaching contexts (Mkhize & Yacoob, 2020). The challenges faced by teachers, therefore, extend beyond classroom practice and involve complex interactions between institutional, social, and systemic factors.

These contextual constraints ultimately manifest within the classroom itself. Teachers experience pressure to complete the syllabus within a limited time, while learners struggle to grasp abstract concepts and to respond adequately during assessment. Classroom interaction becomes increasingly teacher-centred, repetition of explanations increases,

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and meaningful learner participation declines. Learner performance in Grade 12, therefore, reflects not only academic ability but also the cumulative effects of contextual teaching conditions that hinder effective knowledge transmission.

While these challenges resemble those experienced in other rural contexts, classroom realities in Vhembe District suggest an additional layer influencing teaching and learning. Although rural school challenges are often attributed to infrastructure and resources, in Vhembe District, they are intensified by the linguistic distance between the Language of Learning and Teaching (English) and the learners' primary cognitive and communicative language (Tshivenḓa). Teachers, therefore, do not only teach subject content but also mediate meaning across linguistic systems, creating pedagogical overload and conceptual distortion during instruction and assessment.

Despite extensive research on rural schooling challenges, limited attention has been given to how the linguistic environment of learners mediates the teaching and learning difficulties experienced by Grade 12 teachers in Dzondo Circuit. This study, therefore, investigated the challenges faced by Grade 12 rural school teachers within this specific contextual setting.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to examine how teaching and learning challenges are experienced and shaped by contextual conditions in Grade 12 rural classrooms of Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District, and to identify context-responsive approaches that may support improved instructional practice and learner participation.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore how Grade 12 teachers experience teaching and learning challenges in rural schools of Dzondo Circuit.

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- To analyse how school and community conditions shape teaching and learning practices in these classrooms.
- To determine how these conditions influence learner participation and classroom interaction.
- To examine how the linguistic context of learners mediates teaching and understanding of subject content.
- To identify context-responsive approaches that may support improved teaching and learning.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do Grade 12 teachers experience teaching and learning challenges in rural schools of Dzondo Circuit?
- How do school and community conditions shape teaching and learning practices in these classrooms?
- In what ways do these conditions influence learner participation and classroom interaction?
- How does the linguistic context of learners mediate teaching and understanding of subject content?
- What context-responsive approaches may support improved teaching and learning in this environment?

1.6 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Rural Schools

Rural schools are educational institutions located in geographically remote communities characterised by inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified teachers, limited learning resources and socio-economic disadvantages that affect educational quality (Adams & Hollands, 2018; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Johnson et al., 2018). The rural schools in this study are secondary schools located in the Dzando Circuit of the Vhembe

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District in Limpopo Province where learning and teaching takes place in the community with poor infrastructure, socio-economic poverty, lack of access to educational amenities, distance to major service centres and little institutional support. Rural is a geographically and contextually used word.

1.6.2 Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning refers to the interactive process through which teachers facilitate knowledge construction and learners actively develop understanding, skills and attitudes within a particular educational environment (Hardman & Ainscow, 2018; Deng et al., 2019; Dewi & Primayana, 2019). Teaching and learning refers to classroom instructional processes occurring in Grade 12 classes in rural Dzondo Circuit schools.

1.6.3 Challenges

Challenges are structural, pedagogical and socio-economic barriers that hinder effective curriculum delivery and learner performance in schools (Adamson, 2019; Dlamini & Masuku, 2019; Khosa, 2019). Challenges refer to the difficulties experienced by Grade 12 teachers and learners that negatively affect teaching and academic achievement in rural schools.

1.6.4 Strategies

Strategies refer to deliberate instructional or institutional interventions implemented to address learning barriers and improve learner understanding and performance (Hardman & Ainscow, 2018; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Khosa, 2019). Strategies refer to practical methods used by teachers to cope with rural classroom constraints and support Grade 12 learner success.

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1.6.5 Educational Equity

Educational equity is the provision of fair learning opportunities and appropriate support to ensure learners from disadvantaged contexts achieve meaningful educational outcomes (Van der Berg & Spaull, 2019; Hardman & Ainscow, 2018; Govender, 2019). Educational equity refers to enabling learners in rural Dzondo Circuit schools to achieve comparable academic performance despite contextual disadvantages.

1.7 CONTEXTUAL AND LINGUISTIC DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in Dzondo Circuit of Vhembe District, a rural area in which Tshivenda is the primary home language of most teachers and learners. Although English remains the official Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in Grade 12 classrooms, teaching and learning frequently occur within a multilingual environment where Tshivenḓa is used informally to clarify concepts and facilitate understanding. The study, therefore, considered the linguistic environment as part of the contextual conditions shaping classroom practice, rather than as the central focus of the research.

The investigation remained concerned with the broader challenges experienced by Grade 12 teachers in rural schools. The reference to Tshivenḓa served only to describe the setting in which teaching and learning take place and did not redefine the research population, research design, or scope of the study. The study did not examine the teaching of Tshivenḓa as a subject, but the contextual circumstances within which teachers perform their instructional duties.

The study was limited to four secondary schools within Dzondo Circuit. Participant availability determined the final sample. I The research was conducted in four rural secondary schools in Dzondo Circuit. Interviews were conducted with ten teachers of Grade 12 learners across the four schools: four teachers from School A; two teachers from School B; two teachers from School C and two teachers from School D. Four Grade

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12 learners, one from each school, were selected to participate in learner interviews. These learners were interviewed to supplement the teachers' views on challenges to teaching and learning. Thus, the results represent the experiences of teachers and learners in these schools and cannot be statistically generalised to other rural schools.

By situating the findings within a Tshivenḓa-speaking environment, the study provided contextual clarity while maintaining relevance to broader discussions on rural education in South Africa.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to understanding Difficulties in the rural schools will influence the delivery of the curriculum, the involvement of the learners and teacher assistance. These challenges are interrelated and demand context-sensitive solutions.

For teachers, the study identifies practical difficulties encountered during instruction, curriculum coverage, assessment, and learner engagement. The findings may assist teachers to reflect on instructional strategies appropriate to rural classrooms and to recognise contextual factors influencing learner performance. In doing so, the study does not prescribe universal solutions but provides grounded insights that may inform adaptive classroom practices.

School management teams and district officials may use the findings to better understand the interaction between staffing patterns, resource availability, and classroom realities in Grade 12. This understanding may support more informed planning, targeted support programmes, and context-responsive professional development initiatives for rural teachers.

At the policy level, the study contributes evidence relevant to rural education planning. By highlighting how structural conditions and the linguistic environment intersect with teaching practice, the research provides information that may assist in aligning support

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interventions with the actual needs of rural schools rather than uniform system-wide assumptions.

The study also contributes to scholarship in rural education by showing how teaching challenges emerge from the interaction of institutional, community, and classroom factors within a specific local context. The inclusion of the Tshivenḓa-speaking environment does not shift the study to language education but strengthens the interpretation of teaching difficulties in multilingual rural settings. This provides a basis for further research on contextual influences on teaching and learning in similar environments.

Finally, teacher education programmes and professional development initiatives may benefit from the study by gaining insight into the realities of Grade 12 teaching in rural schools. Such knowledge may assist in designing preparation and support programmes that are responsive to rural classroom conditions.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the study by presenting the background, problem statement, aim, objectives, research questions, and significance of the investigation into the challenges experienced by Grade 12 teachers in rural schools of Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District. The discussion highlighted how resource limitations, staffing patterns, professional support, community conditions, and contextual factors shape teaching and learning in these schools. The chapter also clarified that the Tshivenda-speaking environment is considered as part of the contextual setting within which classroom practice occurs, rather than as the primary focus of the research.

By defining the scope and rationale of the study, the chapter established the foundation for the investigation of teaching and learning challenges within this rural context. The next chapter reviews relevant literature related to rural education and classroom practice in order to situate the study within broader scholarly discussions.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Rural education remains one of the most persistent challenges affecting both learner achievement and teacher professional practice across the globe. In South Africa, these challenges are particularly pronounced in historically marginalised rural contexts, where schooling continues to reflect deep-rooted inequalities shaped by colonial and apartheid legacies. This chapter situates the present study within the broader body of literature on rural education, with specific reference to the experiences of Grade 12 teachers in Dzondo Circuit of Vhembe District.

Rural schools in South Africa are characterised by chronic infrastructural deficiencies, limited access to teaching and learning resources, persistent teacher shortages, and weak institutional support systems (Smith, 2019; Jones & Van der Berg, 2018). These challenges are compounded by socioeconomic pressures faced by learners, including poverty, long travel distances to school, irregular attendance, and the expectation to contribute to household income (Khumalo, 2020). Teachers working in such contexts often experience professional isolation, excessive workloads, and restricted opportunities for professional development, which adversely affect instructional quality and morale (Mkhize & Yacoob, 2020; Ngwenya, 2021).

The Dzondo Circuit exemplifies many of these systemic constraints. As a predominantly rural and speaking area, teaching and learning occur within complex linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions that shape classroom practices and learner engagement. Understanding these challenges from the perspectives of teachers and learners is critical for developing context-responsive strategies that can enhance educational quality and learner outcomes.

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Accordingly, this chapter reviews international, African and South African literature on rural education challenges, examines policy responses and intervention strategies, and identifies gaps that justify the present study. The chapter is framed by a constructivist theoretical perspective, which emphasises the centrality of context, experience, and interaction in teaching and learning.

2.2 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON RURAL EDUCATION CHALLENGES

2.2.1 Rural Education in Comparative Perspective

International literature consistently highlights rural education as being shaped by systemic inequalities related to infrastructure, resource availability, teacher support, and policy implementation. Studies across both developed and developing contexts indicate that rural schools often lag behind their urban counterparts in terms of access to textbooks, laboratory equipment, digital technologies, and specialised learning support (Moriarty et al., 2019).

Hardman and Ainscow (2018) note that outdated school buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to digital infrastructure constrain pedagogical innovation and restrict learner engagement. These material constraints not only affect curriculum delivery but also undermine learners' motivation and participation in classroom activities.

Teacher-related challenges are equally prominent in the global literature. Montague (2020) observes that rural teachers frequently experience professional isolation due to geographical remoteness and limited opportunities for collaboration and career advancement. This isolation inhibits the sharing of pedagogical practices and reduces teachers' exposure to innovative teaching strategies. As a result, rural teachers are often unable to implement learner-centred and inquiry-based approaches that are associated with improved learning outcomes.

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These conditions are particularly problematic. Constructivism posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, learning resources, and peers (Piaget, 2018). When rural schools lack adequate resources and institutional support, teachers are constrained in creating meaningful, interactive learning experiences. Consequently, learning tends to remain superficial, teacher-centred, and examination-driven.

Beyond material constraints, global research emphasises the role of structural inequality in shaping rural education outcomes. Johnson, Smith and Smythe (2018) argue that rural education systems are often marginalised within national policy frameworks, resulting in limited accountability and uneven implementation of reforms. Similarly, Wang (2020) demonstrates that rural schools frequently fail to benefit from national digital learning initiatives due to infrastructural limitations, reinforcing the rural–urban divide.

These global patterns underscore that rural education challenges are not isolated or incidental but are embedded within broader sociopolitical and economic structures. This insight provides an important lens for understanding the challenges faced by Grade 12 teachers in Dzondo Circuit, whose experiences reflect globally documented patterns of inequity and marginalisation.

2.2.2 Key Barriers in Rural Education

2.2.2.1 Resource limitations

A dominant theme in the literature is the scarcity of essential teaching and learning resources in rural schools. Li and Lalani (2020) report that rural learners often lack access to textbooks, instructional technologies, and digital learning tools, which significantly limits curriculum engagement and academi

The results are not generalized but only to the sampled rural schools within Dzondo Circuit. Nevertheless, they can give valuable information in the similar rural schooling settings where they can encounter similar issues of teaching and learning.

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c performance. Without adequate resources, teachers are unable to design lessons that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and deeper conceptual understanding.

Wang (2020) further argues that technological deprivation in rural schools reflects broader educational inequities, as learners are excluded from the global flow of information and knowledge. From a constructivist standpoint, this exclusion restricts learners' opportunities to engage with diverse learning tools and experiences that support knowledge construction.

In the context of Dzondo Circuit, resource scarcity is a central constraint affecting teaching and learning. Understanding how teachers navigate these limitations is essential for identifying strategies that can enhance instructional effectiveness despite material shortages.

2.2.2.2 Insufficient funding

Closely linked to resource scarcity is the issue of chronic underfunding. Johnson et al. (2018) demonstrate that limited financial allocations undermine rural schools' capacity to maintain infrastructure, procure learning materials, and retain qualified teachers. Under such conditions, school management tends to prioritise basic operational needs over long-term development initiatives.

Mwangi and Onderi (2020) note that financial instability forces school leaders into short-term decision-making cycles, which inhibit investment in teacher development and learner support programmes. Thabo (2021) further observes that fee-exemption policies, while improving access, have not resolved the financial sustainability challenges faced by rural schools.

For Dzondo Circuit, these findings suggest that teaching and learning challenges cannot be attributed solely to classroom-level factors but must be understood within the broader context of systemic underfunding.

2.2.2.3 Teacher training and professional isolation

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The global literature also highlights significant disparities in access to professional development between rural and urban teachers. Turner and Finch (2019) argue that rural teachers often lack opportunities for continuous professional learning, resulting in outdated pedagogical practices and reduced confidence in addressing diverse learner needs.

Professional isolation further exacerbates these challenges. Tikhomirova (2022) explains that the absence of professional learning communities in rural areas limits reflective practice and collaborative problem-solving. Ndlovu and Vilakazi (2020) describe rural teachers as "peer-support deprived," which reduces their capacity to innovate and adapt teaching strategies.

In Dzondo Circuit, these dynamics are particularly relevant for Grade 12 teachers, whose subject requires advanced pedagogical and content knowledge to prepare learners for high-stakes examinations.

2.3 AFRICAN CONTEXT OF RURAL EDUCATION CHALLENGES

Across the African continent, rural education systems continue to face persistent structural and pedagogical challenges that mirror, and in some cases exceed, those identified in global contexts. Literature from sub-Saharan Africa consistently reports that rural schools are disproportionately affected by inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified teachers, limited instructional resources, and weak institutional support (UNESCO, 2020; Moyo & Modiba, 2021). These challenges are deeply embedded in historical, economic, and political conditions that have shaped unequal patterns of development between rural and urban areas.

In many African countries, rural schools operate within environments characterised by poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and limited access to social services. Learners are often required to travel long distances to school, which negatively affects attendance, punctuality, and concentration (Maphosa & Shumba, 2019). Teachers working in such

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contexts are expected to manage overcrowded classrooms, multi-grade teaching arrangements, and learners with diverse academic and psychosocial needs, often without adequate professional support.

Teacher deployment and retention remain critical concerns. Studies by Adeyemi (2018) and Kadenyi and Kariuki (2020) indicate that rural schools across Africa struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers, particularly in senior secondary grades. This challenge is exacerbated by poor living conditions, limited access to professional development opportunities, and restricted career progression. As a result, rural schools frequently rely on underqualified or inexperienced teachers, which compromises instructional quality and learner achievement.

These conditions constrain meaningful teaching and learning. Constructivist theory emphasises the role of social interaction, contextual relevance, and learner engagement in knowledge construction. However, when teachers lack resources, support, and training, their ability to facilitate interactive and learner-centred pedagogical practices is severely limited. Consequently, teaching tends to be transmission-oriented, with minimal opportunities for learners to actively construct knowledge through dialogue, collaboration, and exploration.

The African literature, therefore, underscores that rural education challenges are systemic rather than incidental. These insights provide a critical comparative backdrop for understanding the challenges experienced by Grade 12 teachers in Dzondo Circuit, whose context reflects broader continental patterns of rural educational marginalisation.

2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT OF RURAL EDUCATION

2.4.1 Historical and Structural Dimensions

South Africa's rural education landscape is shaped by enduring inequalities rooted in colonial and apartheid-era policies that deliberately under-resourced rural and homeland

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areas. Despite significant policy reforms since 1994, rural schools continue to experience disparities in infrastructure, staffing, and resource allocation (Spaull, 2019; Christie, 2020). These disparities are particularly evident in provinces such as Limpopo, where many schools remain poorly resourced and geographically isolated.

Research indicates that rural schools in South Africa often lack basic facilities such as libraries, laboratories, reliable electricity, and internet connectivity (DBE, 2022). These infrastructural deficits directly affect curriculum implementation, particularly at the Grade 12 level, where learners are expected to engage with complex content and develop higher-order cognitive skills.

2.4.2 Language and Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools

Language plays a central role in teaching and learning in South African rural schools. In many rural contexts, learners are taught in their home language in the early grades and transition to English as a language of learning and teaching in later phases. However, in practice, home languages continue to dominate classroom interaction, especially in rural secondary schools (Heugh, 2018; Probyn, 2019).

Studies have shown that teachers frequently code-switch between English and home languages to facilitate comprehension, manage classrooms, and explain complex concepts (Setati & Adler, 2020). While this practice can support understanding, it also reflects broader challenges related to language policy implementation, teacher training, and the availability of learning materials in African languages.

In Dzondo Circuit, it functions as a critical medium through which teaching and learning occur. Understanding challenges faced by Grade 12 teachers, therefore, requires attention to the linguistic realities of the classroom, as language mediates both content delivery and learner engagement.

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2.5 TEACHING AND LEARNING CHALLENGES IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

2.5.1 Teacher-Related Challenges

Teacher-related challenges constitute a major theme in the literature on rural education. Rural teachers often experience heavy workloads, large class sizes, and pressure to produce acceptable Grade 12 results under constrained conditions (Ngwenya, 2021). These demands contribute to stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction.

Limited access to subject-specific professional development further compounds these challenges. According to Mestry and Singh (2020), rural teachers are less likely to participate in workshops, mentoring programmes, and collaborative learning networks due to distance, cost, and staffing constraints. As a result, teachers may struggle to keep abreast of curriculum changes and innovative pedagogical approaches.

For teachers in rural Grade 12 contexts, these challenges are intensified by shortages of textbooks, teaching guides, and supplementary materials. This limits teachers' ability to design engaging lessons and adequately prepare learners for examinations.

2.5.2 Learner-Related Challenges

Learners in rural secondary schools face multiple barriers that affect academic performance. Socio-economic hardship, household responsibilities, and limited parental support often interfere with learners' ability to focus on their studies (Mncube & Harber, 2019). In Grade 12, these challenges are particularly acute due to the high-stakes nature of the National Senior Certificate examinations.

Language-related difficulties further affect learner performance. Learners may struggle to express themselves academically, interpret examination questions, and engage critically with learning materials. From a constructivist standpoint, such difficulties hinder

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learners' active participation in knowledge construction, as they limit meaningful interaction with content and peers.

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2.6 PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN RURAL EDUCATION

Parental involvement is widely recognised as a key factor influencing learner achievement. However, in rural contexts, parental support is often constrained by low levels of formal education, unemployment, and limited familiarity with curriculum requirements (Jeynes, 2018). Parents may value education but feel ill-equipped to support learners academically, particularly at the Grade 12 level.

In speaking communities, cultural expectations and economic pressures may further shape parental engagement. While communities often play a supportive role in learner discipline and moral development, their involvement in academic activities such as homework supervision and examination preparation is frequently limited.

Strengthening partnerships between schools, parents, and communities is therefore essential for improving teaching and learning outcomes in rural contexts.

2.7 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL TEACHERS

Continuous professional development is critical for enhancing teacher competence and instructional quality. However, rural teachers often face barriers to accessing professional development programmes, including distance, cost, and limited substitute staffing (Steyn, 2021). When opportunities are available, they are frequently generic and insufficiently tailored to the specific needs of rural teachers.

For teachers, professional development programmes rarely address language-specific pedagogical challenges, such as developing academic literacy, teaching literature in, or designing assessments aligned with curriculum standards. This gap limits the effectiveness of professional development initiatives and perpetuates instructional challenges.

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2.8 STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RURAL SCHOOLS

The literature identifies several strategies for improving teaching and learning in rural contexts, including targeted teacher support, improved resource allocation, and enhanced community involvement. Technology-enabled learning platforms have also been proposed as a means of expanding access to professional development and learning resources, although infrastructural constraints remain a challenge in many rural areas.

Policy interventions that prioritise rural education, coupled with sustained monitoring and evaluation, are essential for ensuring long-term improvement. Importantly, strategies must be context-sensitive and responsive to the linguistic and cultural realities of rural schools.

2.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONSTRUCTIVISM

The most significant area that supports this study is constructivist theory because the learning process is perceived as an active process in which the learner constructs his/her knowledge through interaction with the teachers, peers, language, learning materials and the classroom environment. However, the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner is used as a supplementary analytical lens in explaining the influence of wider school, family and community environments on learning and teaching in rural schools. Constructivism is a classroom-based learning explanation that occurs in the classroom and the ecological systems theory is an explanation of the systems that occur around the classroom (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 2018). Constructivism emphasises the importance of context, language, and social interaction in shaping learning experiences.

In rural Grade 12 classrooms, constructivist principles highlight the role of language as a mediating tool for learning. When teachers are constrained by limited resources, heavy workloads, and insufficient professional support, their ability to facilitate learner-centred

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and interactive learning experiences is reduced. This theoretical lens, therefore, provides a useful framework for interpreting the teaching and learning challenges experienced by teachers in Dzondo Circuit.

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2.10 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH GAP

The reviewed literature reveals that the issue of rural education is far-reaching and complicated. However, these problems cannot be viewed as a system of independent problems. The combination of these features of resource shortage, teacher support, learner socio-economic background, language practice and parental involvement affects classroom practice. This paper therefore contributes to the existing evidence on the study of rural education by revealing the inter-relationships of these problems as experienced by Grade 12 teachers in the specific case of Dzondo Circuit.

This gap underscores the need for a context-specific investigation that foregrounds teachers' lived experiences and identifies practical strategies for improving teaching and learning outcomes. The present study seeks to address this gap by providing empirical insights that can inform policy, practice, and future research on rural secondary education.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study is based on a research design. To examine the teaching and learning issues of Grade 12 rural school teachers in Dzondo Circuit of Vhembe District, we needed a diversified approach. Interpretivism fits subjective nature perspectives (Bell, 2022). This paradigm was used to conduct a qualitative study of the context-specific and complex problems that Grade 12 teachers in rural schools had to deal with. Dzondo Circuit's circumstances were examined using case studies. The researcher presented substantial and contextualised data on rural Grade 12 teacher (Dang, 2024). It was a research conducted in four country secondary schools of the Dzondo Circuit of Vhembe District. These schools were selected because they were rural schooling environments where Grade 12 teachers find themselves in situations that expose them to the challenges of teaching resources, learner support, parental involvement, curriculum delivery and institutional support.

Participants' perspectives on important topics were assessed in semi-structured interviews (Fife & Gossner, 2024). Hameed (2024) used thematic analysis to evaluate interview subjects. This study used qualitative research concepts, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, to establish reliability (Hossain, 2024). The study considered informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and avoiding deception. The paradigm of qualitative research, objectives of the research, paradigm of interpretivism, purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis were all harmonized to come up with an ethical and context sensitive study. This methodological consistency enabled the researcher to explore the lived experiences of teachers in Grade 12 in the rural schools within Dzondo Circuit and describe the challenges encountered by the teachers in their teaching and learning.

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3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

3.2.1 Definition of Research Paradigm

Research paradigms encompass researchers' beliefs and procedures (Mannheimer, 2024). It impacts the researcher's ontology, epistemology, and data collection and analysis (Modugno, 2024). Paradigms define what, how, and how to interpret research results. The research paradigm provided a rational and philosophical approach to Grade 12 rural school teachers' difficulties.

3.2.2 The Interpretivism Paradigm

Interpretivism studied how people make sense of their experiences (Naeem, 2024). Interpretivism is contrasted with positivism, as it values human meaning-making (Pham, 2024). Proctor (2024) states that interpretivists regard reality as 'socially constructed, and in order to understand subjective realities, one must understand how people see and empathise with one another'. Considering the scope of this study, which examined rural Grade 12 teachers, it was appropriate to use the interpretivist paradigm as the framework. Using interpretivism, we focused on teachers' experiences and how their lived experiences, professional challenges, and emotional states impact their students' learning. The study uncovered the intricate web of factors that shape rural school teaching and learning by giving voice to teachers' lived experiences.

Interpretivism, meaning rather than measuring behaviours, was the focus of this study. Naeem (2024) stated that the central focus of an interpretivist inquiry is understanding how participants create their realities through their experiences. This stance enabled the researcher to consider teachers' narratives as legitimate knowledge rather than mere subjective opinions. Pham (2024) pointed out that within interpretivism, social discourse is paramount in unravelling the intricacies of the educational phenomena. In the case of Dzondo Circuit, teachers, through their professional selves, constructed the challenges of their roles in the community, as well as the institutional edicts. Bell (2022) noted that

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interpretivist research demands a relational symmetry between the researcher and the participants in order to respond to the underlying issues. This justifies the choice of interviews that aim at the depth and breadth of the respondents' experiences. Teachers regarded the issues of large class sizes and inadequate support not just as technical challenges but as deep emotional and professional challenges. Through the use of unstructured measurements, the research may not have accessed the insights. Consequently, the study was able to go beyond mere description to understanding. This also deepened the findings and ensured that the research presented the participants' lived experiences as rural teachers.

The interpretivist paradigm also influenced how data were understood throughout the study. Of the social sciences, qualitative data analysis is the most complex. Explaining qualitative data analysis, Dang (2024) noted the importance of the context, the social environment, and the relevant meaning of the respondents' answers. Thus, the social context of the respondents' answers was one of the primary elements that the researcher utilised when examining the interview data. In her study, Hameed (2024) pointed out that interpretivism is a paradigm of research and inquiry that is more liberal (more flexible) than other paradigms because it allows researchers to explore 'deviations' that present themselves, in contrast to following a predetermined set of beliefs. This type of flexibility was essential because not all of the emotional issues related to exhaustion and absence of professional recognition that teachers indicated were overtly offered in the discussions. According to Fife and Gossner (2024), one of the strengths of having an interpretivist perspective is that it was the participants who controlled the focus of the discussions, and therefore, they were more likely to have an authentic perspective on the issues of the study. When teachers in Dzondo Circuit perceived that their views were appreciated, they were likely to share their views freely. As a result, this study was grounded in the participants' interpretations of the meanings and not the researcher's pre-determined constructs, and it was trustworthy.

3.2.3 Justification for the Use of Interpretivism in this Study

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Interpretivism was needed to analyse Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 rural school teachers' subjective and context-dependent problems. This paradigm was used to analyse these teachers' unique experiences in a complicated and demanding workplace. Interpretivism helps scholars comprehend social and cultural elements that affect rural school teaching and learning. Context was crucial to interpretivism. Consider how resource shortages, multi-grade teaching, and socioeconomic concerns affect rural teachers' behaviour (Reyes, 2021). The interpretivist paradigm helps the researcher comprehend contextual elements and their effects on education, revealing rural teachers' concerns. Interpretivism also helps teachers interpret their own experiences. This was crucial to understanding their problems, perspectives, and solutions. Focusing on teachers' perspectives yielded findings that are grounded in participants' everyday lives and give contextually relevant and practically meaningful insights.

The study justified the use of interpretivism since the research questions pertained to experiences, not results. As stated by Reyes (2021), studies analysing perceptions and lived experiences need interpretive approaches, not explanatory models. The obstacles confronted by Grade 12 teachers within Dzondo Circuit were the result of specific historical, contextual, and institutional cultural factors. Bell (2022) claimed interpretivism is appropriate when the researcher seeks to capture meaning from the perspective of the participant. Resource and support deficiencies were viewed and defined by teachers within varying contexts, scopes, and backgrounds. Naeem (2024) argued that interpretivism research is characterised by the existence of multiple realities rather than a single, unifying explanation. The researcher adopted an approach that valued meaning, and thus the study focused on how teachers constructed the meaning of their work and how these meanings affected their teaching. The findings were more grounded as they represented the lived experiences of the participants. The study's focus on the realities of rural schools as opposed to an academic abstraction increased its importance.

The ethical dimension of the study, more specifically the use of interpretivism, was most evident in the works of Hossain (2024), who, in relation to qualitative research, noted the significance of the voice and dignity of the participants throughout the research process.

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The teachers were not objectified as mere subjects of analysis but were regarded as valuable participants in the enquiry of rural education. According to Dang (2024), most interpretivist research studies see the value of engaging the participants and researchers in a reciprocal meaning-making process. Such a process enabled the teachers to release their frustration, hope, and professional identity, knowing fully that there would be no judgment against them. Pham (2024) added that in interpretivism, findings tend to be more authentic because they resulted from in-depth, multi-faceted interactions, rather than mere data mining. Most teachers in the Dzondo Circuit felt their concerns were ignored by those in power. In this case, the study also provided an opportunity for these teachers to influence the creation of the knowledge that would be used to speak on their behalf. This increased the study's ethical defensibility and provided a solid basis for the study's conclusions and recommendations. Hence, the interpretivist paradigm was ethically and methodologically justified in this study.

3.2.4 Philosophical Assumptions of Interpretivism

Interpretivism guided this study on the experiences of Grade 12 rural school teachers of Dzondo Circuit. As Ugwu, Ekere and Onoh (2021) state, from the view of constructivism, different and multiple realities exist because of the various subjective experiences and backgrounds of the individuals. The study, therefore, used these assumptions to examine the different ways teachers described and domesticated challenges, such as lack of adequate resources, difficulties in learner engagement, and rural-set curriculum delivery. The study emphasised that there is difficulty in gaining knowledge about teaching challenges except through the engagement of teachers in the classrooms and capturing the pedagogical moments. Yong, Maizaitulaidawati and Kamarudin (2021) opine that interpretivism is a research approach that requires the researcher and the subjects to be in a study that involves a higher degree of engagement, accessibility, and an esoteric dimension, which, in this case, was obtained through the use of semi-structured interviews and the observation of the teaching activities.

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Interpretivism, as an approach, views the researcher and participants as co-constructors of knowledge, as opposed to the researcher simply collecting data. This perspective helped define the study, where teachers' accounts were taken as credible evidence of educational obstacles, without being dismissed as opinions to be evaluated against some criteria (Omodan, 2024). The study then focused on context, culture, and social structure in the interpretation of rural teaching. According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022), these kinds of assumptions are crucial in helping researchers manage complexity and multiplicity in social phenomena. In view of the above, the study was able to focus on the context of Dzondo Circuit and unravel the relationship between scarcity of teaching and learning resources, levels of teacher agency, and the socio-economic status of learners, and articulate findings that were reflective of the lived and practical realities of the participants.

3.2.5 Ethical Implications of Interpretivism

Ethical dimensions for this study were also guided by interpretivism. According to Hossain, Alam and Ali (2024), qualitative interpretivist studies defend and protect researcher participants' dignity and voice in the research. In the current study, ethics were concerned with teachers' unrestricted articulation of their views and positions regarding classroom challenges without being judged or suffering adverse professional repercussions. Dang, Van Nguyen and Tran (2024) point out that ethics of interpretivism are of transparency and respect, which guided the researcher in articulating the aim and the processes of the study, and what the participants could expect as outcomes. This way, all teachers were able to provide informed consent and were made aware that they could withdraw, which enhanced the reliability and trustworthiness of the data collected.

Constructivist/interpretivist ethics calls for reflexivity in all stages of the research process. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) state that researchers must engage in self-analysis concerning their impact, biases, and assumptions when working with research subjects. The researcher of this study practised reflection through journaling and memo writing in order to track self-impact on the process of data collection and its interpretation. Proctor

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(2024) indicates the importance of such self-reflection in the field of rural education research, where research subjects may be vulnerable to local relations of power and may feel criticised by research instruments. The study worked with these ethics, so the grounded data analysis of teachers' perspectives involved authentic teachers' beliefs while protecting the study's participants and their data, trust in the research, and participants' privacy.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

3.3.1 Definition of Research Approach

A researcher's method or plan to combine study components logically is called a research approach (Tomás & Bidet, 2023). The study's research paradigm influences data collection, analysis, and interpretation decisions. Qualitative, quantitative, and hybrid research methodologies are common (Bell, 2022).

Each method has advantages and suits different research issues and goals. This study used a research strategy that fit the interpretivist paradigm and answered the research questions.

3.3.2 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research examines natural events and how people interpret those (Dang, 2024). Qualitative research is appropriate for researching complex, context-dependent phenomena that are hard to define. Researchers may collect large amounts of data to understand people's thoughts and activities. Dzondo Circuit's Grade 12 rural school teachers' challenges were explored using qualitative methods. Issues faced by teachers and potential solutions were analysed through qualitative methods, including interviews. The qualitative method here was open-ended and allowed respondents to construct their own narratives, yielding a richer understanding of the problem (Fife & Gossner, 2024). The qualitative method also illustrated the teachers' social and cultural backgrounds. The research examined various contextual factors affecting teaching and learning in rural

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schools and showed the complexity of the challenges in the education system. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the participants' lives in a way a quantitative approach could not.

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3.3.3 Justification for the Use of the Qualitative Approach in this Study

This study employed qualitative methods for numerous reasons. The study questions required an exploratory approach due to rural Grade 12 teachers' complex problems. Quantitative approaches would have made participants' experiences less clear (Hameed, 2024). Qualitative research is suited to interpretivism. Since interpretivism encourages subjective meanings and interpretations, qualitative data collection was necessary to uncover these experiences. Qualitative approaches helped researchers understand and respect participants' perspectives, ensuring findings mirrored teachers' reality (Hossain et al., 2024). A desire to study rural school teaching and learning prompted qualitative research. Many social, economic, and cultural issues impact rural education. Mannheimer (2024) used qualitative research to explore Dzondo Circuit teachers' problems. To promote rural education research and generate locally relevant findings, Vhembe District rural schools were researched. Qualitative research was best for this study because it could capture the topic's complexity, match the interpretivist paradigm, and evaluate rural school contextual factors that affect teaching and learning. This strategy allows the researcher to obtain extensive data on Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 rural school teachers' issues, improving rural education expertise.

The qualitative methodology is further validated as it captures profoundly the teachers' experiences within the school environments where the teachers were situated. Dang (2024) defended the choice of qualitative research on the basis that the researcher is more interested in understanding the individual's construction of their realities and not quantifying them. She, therefore, was able to make sense of and construct the various challenges, such as work overload, scarcity of resources, and insufficient organisational backing, as institutional frustration in her own way. Hameed (2024) stressed that qualitative research is aimed at understanding various phenomena in a complicated social system in order to obtain the meaning that is produced through social relationships and social practices. Consequently, the teachers within Dzondo Circuit not only described the challenges they encountered but also their effects on their motivation and

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classroom practices. Qualitative research methods, according to Dang (2024), help the researcher obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon by collecting data in a natural setting. This improved the study as the outcomes depicted the realities of rural teaching as opposed to a reality that was derived through an abstraction. The qualitative methodology, therefore, increased the relevance and reliability of the research within the context of rural education.

3.3.4 Strengths of the Qualitative Approach

The use of a qualitative approach for this study was justified as it provided detailed insights about the context of rural teaching as described by Fife and Gossner (2024). Qualitative research has the ability to provide in-depth descriptions of social phenomena to Great depth, which was needed to assess the complexities of social phenomena in the cases of Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 teachers. With the qualitative approach, the researchers were able to assess the complexities of the social phenomena in the case of resource scarcity, multi-grade teaching, learners' engagement, institutional support and the case of Dzondo Circuit teachers, which the quantitative approach might have overlooked. Social phenomena and lived experiences described by qualitative researchers and Fife and Gossner (2024) were the essence of the study, as it attempted to understand the rural context and the teachers' subjective experiences.

Furthermore, the qualitative techniques employed were flexible in relation to the evolving focus of the data. For instance, Hameed (2024) argues that unstructured interviews, in conjunction with thematic analysis, provide the opportunity for participants to raise and discuss issues which the researcher may not have had in sight, or a less than robust sense of, and, therefore, warrant further examination. In this instance, teachers' issues of emotional exhaustion, professional isolation, and community engagement were thoroughly examined, respectively, through thematic coding. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), this is one of the most dominant features of qualitative research. In the case of Dzondo Circuit, the qualitative approach provides evidence that is pragmatically

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useful for interventions, policy formulation, and the appreciation of the local socio-cultural context of the teaching and learning outcomes.

3.3.4 Limitations of the Qualitative Approach

There were also some weaknesses when using the qualitative method in the study. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) described how qualitative research lacks statistical generalisability, meaning it fails to represent the broader population. The study in the Dzondo Circuit provides insights applicable only to a small number of South African rural school participants (Grade 12 teachers and learners). Even though they were rich in information, the result in this case could not be generalised to rural schools in Vhembe District and across South Africa. The study concentrated on this limitation and on the depth of contextual understanding, and not breadth or representativeness.

Additionally, the collection and analysis of qualitative data are always very resource/work intensive, and this will always call for a great deal of interpretation of the data by the researcher himself/herself. Proctor (2024) attributes the potential for subjectivity to this scenario because the researcher's biases and perspectives could ultimately influence the coding and interpretation process. In the study, the use of reflexive practices, peer review, and member checking was introduced to control for and mitigate this situation, but they still directed the qualitative process, and even though these practices are not qualitative in nature, they are accepted as qualitative because of the orientation of the study. The intensive nature of qualitative research, in this instance, also had to be balanced with the potential and clear limitations for the rural education of Dzondo Circuit.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.4.1 Definition of Research Design

A research design governs question development, data gathering, and analysis. A structured framework describes the study's rigorous and cohesive methods to attain

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research goals (Modugno, 2024). Research design determines data collection, analysis, and kind (Naeem, 2024). It is a precise technique that connects theoretical and empirical research to provide reliable, trustworthy, and useful discoveries.

3.4.2 Case Study Research Design

Qualitative case studies provide an in-depth exploration of challenging issues in their real-life context (Pham, 2024). Case studies are suitable for investigating a single event within a limited system, such as Dzondo Circuit's Grade 12 rural school teachers' issues. This design helps researchers study contextual factors to understand the phenomenon in its natural setting (Proctor, 2024). Case studies were used to explore rural Grade 12 teachers' instructional challenges. Case studies helped the researcher comprehend Dzondo Circuit's social, cultural, and economic impacts on rural schooling. The study studied these settings to discover rural educational difficulties underlying dynamics, giving policy and practical insights.

The case study design is commendable as the researcher was able to gain first-hand knowledge regarding the teaching realities as opposed to superficial teaching accounts. Pham (2024) states that the most significant benefit that case study research provides is exploring a phenomenon within the boundaries of its real-world context. In this case, the researcher's real-world context included challenges such as limited teaching resources, crowded classrooms, and institutional expectations, which shaped teachers' experiences. Proctor (2024) highlights that the overwhelming focus on one or more of the contextual challenges and the teaching resources defeats the purpose of the qualitative case study approach, which is to focus on contextual challenges to teaching overwhelming and crowded classrooms. Teaching challenges are perceived as insurmountable and disconnected problems. Pham (2024) states that case studies offer more depth as they encourage the researchers to focus more on the interactions and relationships of the participants over time. Teachers were not considered participants in a one-time query. This case study approach provided the study with findings that were deeply rooted in the

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reality of the school settings, as opposed to findings that were put on paper with little regard to the teaching practices.

3.4.3 Justification for the Use of Case Study Design in this Study

This study employed case studies for many reasons. To begin, the research subject needs to examine the issues faced by a specific group of rural Dzondo Circuit school teachers. The case study technique was excellent for this work because it allowed for a detailed exploration of complex difficulties in their real-life situations, providing an extensive and contextualised understanding of the phenomena (Reyes, 2021). Second, interpretivist research made case studies perfect. Interpretivism prioritises understanding people's meanings and experiences in their social environments, and the case study technique enables the researcher to directly engage with participants and their workplaces (Tomás & Bidet, 2023). This research paradigm-design relationship provided a philosophically coherent and methodologically sound study. The researcher also captured rural school teachers' complicated challenges using case study methods. Considering individual conditions allowed the study to explore resource limits, socioeconomic factors, and cultural dynamics that produce these challenges. This much information would have been difficult to gather using other methods, making case studies the ideal choice. Finally, the case study technique permitted Dzondo Circuit adaptation. Rural education has several context-dependent challenges. The case study technique allows researchers to holistically and integratively evaluate these issues, ensuring detailed and contextually appropriate conclusions (Bell, 2022).

The case study design in this instance was justified, as it was related to the goal of obtaining contextually relevant findings as opposed to obtaining findings that are contextually irrelevant. Reyes (2021) said that case studies are appropriate when researchers attempt to capture details of intricate social phenomena in an enclosed context. This gave the researcher the liberty to concentrate on the Dzondo Circuit as an educational ecosystem, with its peculiar historical, cultural, and institutional attributes. According to Bell (2022), case studies are particularly beneficial when a researcher wants

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to obtain an understanding of how the participants perceive their world from within the context. This was the case, as the social dimensions of the participants' professional problems were inextricably linked to the schools, the communities, and the professional milieu. Thick description is a hallmark of case study research, and this helped enhance the qualitative findings in the eyes of the critics (Reyes, 2021). The researcher concentrated on a specific population and was able to capture the intricate dynamics of rural teaching. Thus, the study was enhanced because the design of the study ensured that the conclusions were based on empirical evidence and not on theoretical speculation.

3.4.4 Scope and Boundaries of the Case Study

The case study focused on the teachers of Grade 12 within Dzondo Circuit of Vhembe District. Pham (2024) suggests that case studies work best when the phenomenon being studied is examined within a defined bounded system. The study examined under-resourced rural schools that faced the challenges of multi-grade teaching and had learners from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. The researcher limited the study to these schools so as to make the data collection relevant to the context and manageable. According to Dang, Van Nguyen and Tran (2024), having boundaries makes a study focused and hence increases the level of understanding. It was within these schools that the researcher had the opportunity to study the teaching and learning constraints of Grade 12 teachers. The researcher also endeavoured to capture the intricacies of the local culture, the school, the community, and the institution.

The scope also specifies the sources of the data and the timeframe for data collection. Creswell and Creswell (2023) state that case studies stipulate what will and will not be included to ensure the research is coherent. Only teachers with at least two years of experience in rural teaching and who agreed to take part in the study were included. In order to preserve the focus, non-teaching staff and schools beyond the Dzondo Circuit were excluded. This delimitation provided the opportunity to study in-depth specific contextual facets of the classroom, such as the practices, the challenges with resources, and the strategies the teacher employed. The researcher was therefore able to

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document Grade 12 rural teaching for what it truly was, rather than the often misleading and generalised perceptions of rural teaching and education in large areas. This also meant that the researcher was able to describe the specific contextual challenges of the education system.

3.4.5 Limitations of Case Study Design

The design of the case study established specific bounds within this study. As Pham (2024) and Proctor (2024) suggest, case studies are specific to their context and thus may not be generalised to other settings. Particularly in this case, the findings were based on Dzondo Circuit and should not be generalised to the other rural schools in South Africa. While the quality of the data was high, as it was rich and deep, the closeness of the study limited the results from being applicable to other district schools. The researcher noted that the intensive focus on one circuit meant that the other rural areas could, and likely would, experience different challenges and/or different sets of experiences brought about by the different structures and contexts.

Moreover, the case study design was predicated on the good faith of the participants regarding their honesty and detail in their responses. Dang, Van Nguyen and Tran (2024) suggest that the over-reliance on subjective narratives may introduce bias in the case of a lack of full disclosure, or if the participants' understanding of the situation was different. Due to time and logistical constraints, the scope of schools and teachers was narrowed. These restrictions did affect the scope of the study; however, by employing purposive sampling, data triangulation, and thematic analysis, the scope was brought down, but the depth, quality, and context-rich insights were kept high. The case study approach proved effective in capturing the intricacies involved in the challenges of teaching Grade 12s within Dzondo Circuit.

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3.5 TARGET POPULATION

3.5.1 Definition of Target Population

The target population is the complete group of people or cases with the researcher's interests and to whom the study's findings are meant to be generalised (Dang, 2024). A sample is taken from the bigger group, which includes all the people the researcher wants to understand. All rural Grade 12 teachers in Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District were the target group for this study. The research focused on these teachers' experiences, issues, and perspectives.

3.5.2 Description of the Target Population for this Study

Grade 12 teachers at Dzondo Circuit schools were studied. In rural Limpopo's Vhembe District, Dzondo Circuit, schools face resource limitations, multi-grade teaching, and socioeconomic constraints. We picked these teachers because they are participating in the educational processes under inquiry and may have unique insights into rural teaching and learning challenges. The research targeted Grade 12 teachers in Dzondo Circuit who had at least 6 years of rural school experience and were willing to participate. For useful data, participants needed rural school teaching experience.

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Crafting a detailed description of a target population allows a study to concentrate on individuals who can meaningfully resolve or contribute to a research problem. As Creswell and Poth (2018) noted, participants in qualitative studies need to have firsthand experience of the phenomenon being studied. This principle applied to Grade 12 teachers of Dzondo Circuit, as they were the ones who experienced the teaching situations being studied. According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2020), possessing embedded or firsthand experience and defining a population increases the qualitative findings' credibility, as it shows who was included and the rationale. This study's teachers were not randomly selected; they were purposefully selected due to their involvement in the rural schooling context. Yin (2018) posited that in case study research, participants should be

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information-rich, not just in numbers. This principle is applicable to the study, as it focused on teachers and participants with in-depth knowledge of rural challenges. This balance improved the study by ensuring that the rural teaching experiences captured in the data were not just a general rural perception.

3.5.3 Characteristics of the Target Population

The chosen population has several important traits for this investigation. First, all teachers worked in rural schools with low resources, infrastructure, and learner socioeconomic gaps (Fife & Gossner, 2024). Teaching and learning challenges often include deficiencies not seen in urban or suburban schools. Second, Grade 12 teachers were targeted. Grade 12 is significant because, in South Africa, the National Senior Certificate (NSC) tests determine one's eligibility for higher education. In rural communities, Grade 12 teachers face the additional pressure of having learners pass the NSC exams because they are likely to be educationally underprepared (Hameed, 2024). Some of the target population teachers were novices, while others were veterans; this mix of experience provided the study with multiple perspectives on the challenges teachers face in rural schools. The target population consisted of male and female teachers, thereby improving the gender balance in rural education. The target demographic's sociocultural background was also a focus of the study. The rurality of Dzondo Circuit influenced teachers' teaching and their relationships with learners and their parents, which is one of the socio-cultural issues the study sought to elucidate to understand the challenges faced by rural school teachers.

The target population's characteristics determine the breadth and significance of the data collection. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) state that, in qualitative studies, participant characteristics strongly influence the interpretation of findings, and in this case, the experience and context of the teachers in the Dzondo Circuit were likely to shape the range of perspectives captured by the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that some variation in a qualitative sample enhances analysis. The range of participant experiences included novice and experienced teachers, as well as participants from various subject

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areas. Yin (2018) argues that, in case study research, participants' social and professional backgrounds aid interpretation. Additionally, the rural status of a good number of participants probably influenced their interactions with learners and communities. These characteristics of the participants helped the study to produce results that were based on real professional experiences.

3.5.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The established inclusion criteria ensured that participants were directly relevant to the study's research concerns. The criteria for participant selection further strengthen the study's credibility in qualitative terms (Hossain et al., 2024). The participants comprised Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 teachers, in this case. Teaching in the Dzondo Circuit for at least 6 years was one of the criteria, as was being ready to divulge some of their experience. Including male and female teaching participants improved the gender balance. The participants, in this case, represented all the teachers who offered different disciplines and subject areas to ensure sufficient variety and diversity of viewpoints and perspectives. Consequently, the study was able to examine a wide range of problems and challenges with respect to teaching conditions and resources, as well as learner participation and engagement.

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Equally important, exclusion criteria helped maintain focus. As their experiences were not aligned with the study's objectives, teachers with less than 6 years of rural teaching experience, non-Grade 12 teachers, and teachers from schools beyond the borders of the Dzondo Circuit were excluded from the study (Naeem et al., 2024). Equally, teachers who were uncontactable or indicated a lack of willingness were also excluded from the study. Through the employment of both the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the researcher ensured that all the selected participants were information-rich and also possessed, to a high degree, the capacity to render insights that were specific, reliable, and relevant to understanding the obstacles and challenges to Grade 12 education in rural settings, Dzondo Circuit.

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3.6 SAMPLING

3.6.1 Definition of Sampling

Sampling means the process of studying a subset of the target population to learn more about the entire group being examined. Hossain (2024) points out that sampling in qualitative studies is not undertaken for the sake of statistical generalisation but for the deep value of the information that participants with specific contexts can provide. This study focuses on some Grade 12 teachers from rural schools in the Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District, who have first-hand experience of teaching in resource-poor, multi-grade settings. Mannheimer (2024) posits that purposive sampling is best when a researcher has in mind a particular participant with a specific characteristic, knowledge, or experience that can clarify the phenomenon under study. In this regard, the study purposefully recruited teachers with a minimum of 6 years of experience teaching in rural schools to ensure that the research data collected would be meaningful and relevant to the teaching and learning challenges in the rural school context.

Moreover, sampling serves as a methodological bridge between the research population and the study's goal, shaping how research outcomes are captured and understood. Dang, Van Nguyen and Tran (2024) state that selecting a purposive sample improves the credibility and transferability of qualitative research findings by ensuring participants are information-rich cases rather than those chosen haphazardly. Within Dzondo Circuit, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to concentrate on teachers whose lived experiences exemplified the distinctive socio-cultural, economic, and institutional frameworks of rural schools. This facilitated the unearthing of patterns and themes that would assist practical arrangements and policy recommendations. By focusing on depth rather than breadth, the study uncovered the intricacies of teaching problems, and this depth provided a strong basis for the analysis and interpretation of rural educational realities (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022).

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3.6.2 Purposive Sampling Technique

Based on study goals, non-probability sampling was utilised to choose participants (Modugno, 2024). Researchers purposefully select individuals most likely to provide rich, relevant, and varied data to answer study questions. This method works well in qualitative research that prioritises depth over breadth. The Grade 12 teachers from remote Dzondo Circuit schools who possess the requisite teaching proficiency and rural working experience were chosen through purposive sampling. Teaching, rural, and study experience were chosen. The researcher collected reliable, useful data that supported the study's aims by observing teachers in action.

This study employed purposive sampling since the researcher sought participants with a specialised understanding of the rural teaching context. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative sampling should emphasise rich cases rather than large case counts. This meant that the chosen Grade 12 teachers were articulate regarding the particular challenges of their teaching profession. According to Patton (2015), purposive sampling improves qualitative research by enabling researchers to choose participants with particular expertise concerning the phenomena of interest. For this study, the teachers were selected based on their rural teaching experience, not on their availability. This way, the study achieved depth of understanding, moving beyond superficial descriptions. Yin (2018) noted that, in case study research, participant selection is important for aligning with the study's purpose, thereby enhancing the credibility of the results. Hence, the purpose of the research was to provide contextually specific insights rather than broad generalisations.

3.6.3 Justification for the Use of Purposive Sampling in this Study

This research purposively sampled Grade 12 rural school teachers to understand their difficulties. The research focused on individuals with direct experience of the difficulties and who could provide detailed, contextual information. This purposeful sample research selected a few professors with the most appropriate skills and experience (Naeem, 2024).

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This was essential for collecting rich, complete data to investigate the issue. Purposeful sampling chose Dzondo Circuit School and experienced-level participants with diverse viewpoints. Qualitative case studies enabled selective sampling. Purposive sampling ensures a rich, informative sample to enable case study researchers to comprehend a phenomenon in a given setting (Pham, 2024). The researcher chose participants based on the study's relevance to acquire contextually grounded and theoretically relevant data.

The remote teaching realities of participants in this research required the use of purposive sampling. Patton (2015) noted the value of depth over breadth in gathering information from research participants. Similarly, for this study, only teachers with substantial experience in Dzondo Circuit could provide contextualised descriptions of the challenges. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), when researching from a qualitative perspective, the lived experiences of individuals are at the heart of the research questions, thus necessitating specific sampling criteria. Extensive experience of the participants within the rural teaching contexts is what justifies this study's focus on the selected individuals. The reason for this focus, according to Yin (2018), is that in purposeful sampling, the case study researcher can achieve greater analytical depth as a result of the case's relevance to the study. This rationale is substantiated in that the data were professional experiences rather than opinions, and, in the case of some participants, were not pseudo or secondary.

3.6.4 Sample Size Determination

In qualitative research, the principle of data saturation determines the sample size, as it occurs when adding new information does not yield new themes or understanding (Proctor, 2024). Qualitative studies are not quantitative, but they are based on data richness and depth as opposed to large sample sizes.

Despite the fact that the study initially intended to get more participants, ten (10) participants were eventually accessible and were involved in the study. These participants were ten (10) Grade 12 rural school teachers of Dzondo Circuit, Vhembe District. This is because the four schools together only had 10 teachers who were teaching Tshivenḓa

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Grade 10 to 12. Four teachers were from school A, two teachers from school B, two teachers from school C, and two teachers from school D. Although the sample size was smaller, data saturation was realised, with similar themes being replicated throughout the responses given by the participants. The qualitative research of the past has proven that saturation can be achieved with small samples, especially in case study research where participants have similar contextual experiences (Reyes, 2021). The presence of both male and female teachers/learners, along with diversity in terms of age/teaching experience, ensured that the data reflected a diversity of views regarding the problem of teaching and learning in rural Grade 12.

This study's sample size was determined by data saturation principles, not by fixed metrics. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) noted that, in qualitative studies, saturation was often reached with relatively small sample sizes when participants had similar contextual backgrounds. This scholarship justified having nine subjects in this study, given that the teachers and learners all worked in the same rural school setting. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), in qualitative studies, the determination of the number of participants is based on data richness rather than statistical representativeness. The recurrence of the same themes across several interviews indicated that the study had reached sufficient thematic depth to warrant significant analysis. Yin (2018) also suggested that, in case study research, sample depth is more important than breadth, especially when the study is set within specific parameters. Having both teachers and learners in the study also enhanced the quality of the data, as it gave the researcher multiple vantage points on the same educational problem. The sample size, therefore, fully complied with the parameters of qualitative research and was methodologically sound.

3.6.5 Sampling Rationale

For this research, the purposive sampling approach was used, as the participants are likely to provide the most pertinent and detailed data. According to Patton (2015) and Creswell and Poth (2018), The selection of the participants was done using the purposive

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sampling method where they were actively involved in teaching and learning at Grade 12 in the rural schools. The sample was considered sufficient because the study was intended to provide a qualitative understanding in depth rather than to conduct a statistical generalisation. Some of the similar issues such as inadequate resources, overcrowding, parent participation, student motivation and language challenges were observed in more than one response by the participants in the data analysis. This repetition implied that they were sufficiently thematic up to the conclusion of this qualitative case study.

As for the study's emphasis on depth rather than breadth, this also serves as a justification for the sampling technique used. In case studies, Yin (2018) states that purposive sampling allows the researcher to focus on information-rich cases rather than on statistically representative samples. The participants chosen enabled the researcher to give a detailed account of the patterns, themes, and common experiences. This captured the context of the findings, pragmatically, and the reality of the challenges of rural teaching at Grade 12, as the teaching recommendations aimed to address the challenges presented by the participants.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

3.7.1 Definition of Data Collection Instruments

Research participants' data is obtained utilising instruments (Tomás & Bidet, 2023). Examples include surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. Research design, questions, and objectives determine data collection tools. Qualitative research data collection devices generate rich, complete information that provides deep insights into the issue.

3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

The study used semi-structured interviews. Qualitative semi-structured interviews provide fluid yet directed discussion (Bell, 2022). Flexible semi-structured interviews let

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interviewers dig deeper. This study used semi-structured interviews to assess rural Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 teachers' challenges. The researcher may ask follow-up questions or discuss other subjects during interviews using a schedule of important questions. This strategy focused interviews on research goals while enabling participants to share their experiences and viewpoints. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to freely communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, yielding qualitative data. This showed the researcher the intricacy and context of rural school teaching issues.

Interviews of a semi-structured kind provided balanced guidance and freedom during the collection of data. As stated by Creswell and Poth (2018), this interview format allowed the investigator to steer the conversation, while participants could raise issues of their interest. This was particularly the case in the context of Dzondo Circuit because the environments of various schools and the individual issues of teachers shaped their experiences differently. In defending the value of semi-structured interviews, Kallio et al. (2016) stated that participants could clarify their meanings and address sensitive, deep issues. This was the space created where teachers were able to say how the shortages of resources, overwhelming workload, and scanty support, adversely (or positively) impacted their pedagogy. Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) pointed out that the case of qualitative interviewing that tends not to work is the case where respondents do not seem to be interrogated but ignored. With this case in point, the data collection procedure was centred on listening, which built and cultivated trust and freedom. The use of semi-structured interviews made it possible for the researchers to collect narratives and descriptions, rather than the collection of data in the form of brief answers, which enriched data fusion. Semi-structured interviews promoted the study objective of capturing lived experiences, not mere perceptions.

3.7.3 Structure of the Interview Guide

This study's interview guide was meticulously prepared to cover all essential subjects and encourage discussion. The guide encouraged broad experience and idea exchange with open-ended enquiries. Research aims to divide issues into rural school teaching

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problems, resource availability, socio-economic conditions, and teaching methods. The interview plan included probing questions to probe concerns. The researcher may ask a participant how a problem affected their teaching, how they tried to fix it, and what help they needed. This flexible form lets researchers collect reliable data while engaging participants. Non-study teachers tested the interview guide. This pilot improved question clarity, relevance, and response meaning. Pilot interviews enhanced study data collection.

3.7.4 Justification for the Use of Semi-Structured Interviews in this Study

Grade 12 rural school teachers' difficulties were discussed in semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews fully explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in qualitative research (Dang, 2024). Understanding Dzondo Circuit teachers' complicated issues necessitated this. Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility. The interview guide offered structure, but the researcher may adjust questions based on participant replies to accommodate unexpected subjects or concerns (Fife & Gossner, 2024). This flexibility allowed the interviews to be tailored to each teacher's requirements and incorporate all perspectives. The interpretivist study employed semi-structured interviews. Interpretivism encourages semi-structured interviews to uncover subjective experiences (Hameed, 2024). Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to express themselves freely, generating rich, qualitative data that helped the research succeed. Researchers and participants bonded during semi-structured interviews. Rural teachers might avoid difficult subjects (Hossain, 2024). Conversational interviews facilitated honest storytelling. The study's findings were reliable due to better data quality and richness.

3.7.5 Pilot Testing of the Interview Guide

As a part of the initial interviews, rural circuit school teachers of Grade 12 were interviewed using semi-structured questions, which were pretested for clarity and relevance. Dang, Van Nguyen, and Tran (2024) state that pilot testing can help remove cultural misunderstandings and ambiguous interview questions. Therefore, two

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secondary school teachers who were not a part of the primary sample were selected in the pilot and interviewed to test the questions. Teacher feedback identified problems related to the complexity of some of the questions and instructions. Broache (2022) argues that pilot research reduces the gap between the abstract constructs of a research proposal and the practical experiences of the interviewees. After considering and responding to teacher feedback in the guide construction, the researcher improved the guide's ability to generate rich and robust data in the rural context.

The initial interviews, apart from testing researcher-participant dynamics, also evaluated logistical aspects such as the interviews' length, recording procedures, and engagement techniques. Turner III and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022) assert that identifying practical limitations before the actual study streamlines the collection of the data and optimises its quality. The researcher was able to ascertain that 45 minutes was a reasonable allocation of time that enabled each participant to articulate their views and to take into consideration their potential exhaustion. The pilot interviews also revealed the necessity of additional prompts for topics deemed more sensitive, such as teacher frustration, inadequate resources, and institutional barriers. Guides were modified to include additional questions for smoother progression as well as some reflection for deeper probing. Dang, Van Nguyen and Tran (2024) assert that pilot testing qualitative tools proves their reliability and validity and that the significance of research lies in its ability to capture real experiences. Thus, the pilot interviews bolstered confidence that the main study interviews would truly capture the sentiments of the Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 teachers.

3.7.6 Interview Procedure and Setting

Interviews took place at participants' schools so that the participants could feel comfortable, and the schools could provide an authentic context. Roberts (2020) states that participant environments help elucidate interactions, the scope of the barriers, and the context in which the phenomena of interest (for the researcher) operate. The researcher tried to interview the teachers at the most convenient times, in order not to

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interfere with their teaching responsibilities. The interviews were each about 45 to 60 minutes long, which gave participants the opportunity to discuss the difficulties in teaching multiple grades, the availability of resources, and institutional support. Broach (2022) states that participants reference more real experiences when in their own surroundings, which is why the interviews likely provided the richest data. The verbal accounts, non-verbal behaviour of the participants, and the environment helped the researcher document the complexities of teaching and learning in rural contexts.

The semi-structured interviews used a flexible technique to explore emergent issues. As noted by Demirci (2024), qualitative interviews often reveal new sources of participant concern due to unstructured questions. The researcher incorporated active listening and probing to invite teachers to deepen their narration while being careful not to cross emotional or professional discomfort. The sessions were conducted in a private, focused setting to ensure minimal interruptions. Teachers were invited to narrate their lived experiences in detail of the impact of resource scarcity, learner participation, and institutional context on their practice. The data described the lived experiences of the Grade 12 teachers in Dzondo Circuit in a nuanced, context-rich manner. The rubrics of the setting and the procedures fostered data credibility, trust, and openness.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

3.8.1 Definition of Data Analysis

Patterns, relationships, and solutions are generated through careful study and interpretation of research data (Mannheimer, 2024). Analysis of qualitative data focuses on the identification of themes, categories, and relationships in interviews, observations, and various documents (Modugno, 2024). Simplifying complex qualitative data into findings, results, and conclusions enhances overall understanding and reflects the experiences and perspectives of the participants. Using data analysis, the researcher explored and evaluated core concerns of Grade 12 rural school teachers in the Dzondo Circuit.

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3.8.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to describe, organize and explain common patterns of meaning of the interview data. It was a suitable method because the research aim was to understand how the respondents were talking about and defining teaching and learning issues in the rural Grade 12 classes. Through the thematic analysis, the researcher was able to go beyond the description and to get a sense of the latent meaning in the lived experience of the participants (Naeem, 2024). Thematic analysis is arguably one of the most sought-after qualitative approaches due to its robustness, adaptability, and ability to tell the story behind the data (Pham, 2024). Compared to other approaches, thematic analysis goes beyond the mere description of data and gives researchers and analysts an understanding of the nuances, significance, and implications of the various themes. In this case, the researcher was interested in using thematic analysis to understand the various challenges faced by the Grade 12 rural school teachers of Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District. Research themes included lack of resources, socioeconomic challenges, multi-grade teaching, and more general rural education challenges. In the case of this study, the thematic approach showcased and illuminated unbounded and various challenges that the teachers faced and how these challenges affected the education of the learners.

Thematic analysis allows the researcher to consolidate significant amounts of qualitative information into manageable structures. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that thematic analysis facilitates the interpretive process and helps identify the meanings that lie beyond the surface of the participants' narratives. This was useful for the current study, as the layers of the teachers' experiences, such as workload and limited support, contained numerous intricacies. Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) stressed the importance of thematic analysis in qualitative research for providing a clear framework to connect sub-codes to main themes. This assisted the researcher in ascertaining that the findings were based on the participants' actual responses. Braun and Clarke (2021) stated that reflexive thematic analysis helps the researcher to understand his/her role in

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data interpretation. This aids the researcher in focusing in and closely engaging with the data. Using this method, the study was able to articulate the findings in such a manner that the varied and at times complex experiences of rural teaching were conveyed clearly and in an uncomplicated manner. This approach, therefore, increased the credibility of the findings, as well as the analytical depth.

3.8.3 Process of Thematic Analysis

This study employed Proctor's (2024) six-phase theme analysis approach. This approach detected and evaluated key themes in semi-structured interview qualitative data.

- **Phase 1: Familiarisation with the Data**

The researcher was immersed in data by rereading interview transcripts. This step helped us understand the data and uncover early trends or research ideas. The researcher also recorded any recurring themes relating to the study issues.

- **Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes**

The second phase entailed meticulously classifying the data by designating study-related features. To code data, identify them by content and relevance (Saldaña, 2021). Inductive coding revealed fresh, unexpected themes from the data, whereas deductive coding followed the literature and the study's theoretical framework.

- **Phase 3: Searching for Themes**

The researcher found themes by grouping related codes after coding. Data themes identify major research challenges (Reyes et al., 2021). The researcher studied the codes and explored how they could be combined into themes that highlighted teachers' key challenges. "Resource Limitations" codes covered resource constraints, poor facilities, and lack of support."

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- **Phase 4: Reviewing Themes**

The researcher verified and adjusted themes to fit the data. Data collecting themes were reviewed for consistency and coherence. The researcher also verified the original data to ensure the themes were grounded in participants' comments and experiences and updated them as needed for accuracy and relevance.

- **Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes**

The researcher titled each subject to express its core and relevance to the study questions after finalising them. This stage involved outlining each subject and its relationship to the research aims.

- **Phase 6: Producing the Report**

Finally, the theme analysis presented the concepts coherently. The researcher used participant responses to illustrate themes and support the study. Presenting the study's findings and illustrating how themes were highlighted was key to Grade 12 rural school teachers' challenges in Dzondo Circuit.

3.8.4 Justification for the Use of Thematic Analysis in this Study

This study used thematic analysis because it was flexible and rigorous for qualitative data processing. Thematic analysis helps researchers find and understand key patterns and themes by thoroughly describing data (Bell, 2022). It was suitable for complex, context-dependent themes like rural school teaching and learning.

Interpretivism helped with the study's topic analysis. Interpretivism focuses on understanding how individuals interpret their experiences, and theme analysis organises information (Dang, 2024). The researcher employed theme analysis to capture

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participants' subjective experiences and assess the effects of Dzondo Circuit rural schooling.

It was useful for this study since thematic analysis anticipated and emerged topics. The researcher used thematic analysis to explore new themes in the data, ensuring a grounded analysis grounded in participants' experiences, despite expectations derived from the literature and theory (Saldaña, 2021). This makes theme analysis ideal for covering all difficulties. Comprehensive and contextually relevant findings on Grade 12 rural school teachers' experiences.

3.8.5 Coding Process

The most important step in the qualitative data analysis process for Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 teachers was the coding. The process of coding involves breaking down large data while maintaining depth and contextual meaning (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024). The researcher first indulged in the transcripts data collection and noted recurring ideas, phrases, and concepts. The use of open coding made it possible to emphasise the attainment of the pattern as a positive depiction of the phenomenon and worked specifically on the issues of lack of resources, teacher burden, and the impact of culture and other social groups on classroom practice. The phenomenon of coding, in the case of Dang, Van Nguyen and Tran (2024), is a useful approach when no other preconceived ideas should limit the phenomenon to be so defined. Afterwards, the researcher engaged in axial coding, which involves drawing boundaries to determine which codes to cluster into superordinate codes. This is the process of bridging rural and urban paradigms in teaching and learning. Proctor (2024), highlights the importance of balance in making disparate observations, which is the primary objective of this stage. The refinement of the codes is an iterative process, and in this phase, codes were reconciled, merged, or divided in the case of rural teachers, to balance the lived experiences of the participants.

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The term “thematic analysis” refers specifically to the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns (or themes) within the data, and it is a method that organises qualitative data in a way that is coherent and easy to understand. In the thematic analysis described above, the writer implements thematic analysis in a way that is cohesive and clear. The writer explains how each of the themes, for example, the role of the school and the role of the teachers, demonstrates a distinct, real, and relevant phenomenon. The writer clearly and academically demonstrates how the role of the school and the role of the teacher serve as phenomena that matter to the participants in a real, clear, and relevant way. In this example, the writer integrates various phenomena and themes of the role of the school and the role of the teacher in an academically satisfying way. This consideration of various phenomena and themes of the role of the school and the role of the teacher demonstrates an appropriate and academically satisfying understanding of the role of a teacher.

As the literature indicates, ‘A rural school is a place where teachers and learners live outside the centre of population, where the population is fewer than 5,000 people. In these rural schools, teachers and learners are also involved in a more personal than professional relationship.’ Such relationships enable the school to become a community hub and a centre for social and cultural activities.

3.8.6 Handling of Sensitive Data

Given the personal nature of participants' disclosures, the team had to handle sensitive data with meticulous care. According to Hossain, Alam and Ali (2024), identity and confidentiality protection are a requirement and a delicate balance in every qualitative study. The teachers articulated their feelings of professional isolation, which may imply emotional or reputational harm to them. Anonymising pseudonyms and removing the name of the school were the first steps to building a respectful connection with the participants. In line with Dang, Van Nguyen and Tran's (2024) recommendations, the researcher and the supervisory team are the only ones who had access to the recordings and transcripts, and all the files were kept in a protected and encrypted system. The

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researcher took steps to protect participants from potential psychological discomfort during the interviews. Sensitive wording was employed in the initial probes and subsequent questions, and participants were reminded that they had the right to skip any questions or to stop the interview altogether (Demirci, 2024). The notes and reflections on the interviews were protected by the same confidentiality measures that were applied, so even contextual notes and reflections could not be linked to any specific person. While data were handled in compliance with the ethical guidelines of the institution, a balance was struck between the need for transparency and the need for participants to be protected. The management of sensitive (to participants) information strengthened participants' trust, which, in turn, increased the richness, authenticity, and credibility of the qualitative data and enabled teachers to give unreserved comments about their teaching difficulties in Dzondo Circuit.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

3.9.1 Definition of Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

The credibility of qualitative research findings is assessed. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability matter (Fife & Gossner, 2024). Like validity and reliability in quantitative research, these components ensure that study findings accurately represent participants' experiences and are applicable to other contexts. Qualitative research is reliable and meaningful when trustworthy.

3.9.2 Credibility

Attaining trustworthy findings from studies depends on the researchers' ability to articulate the opinions of the participants and the extent to which the findings reflect the participants' opinions (Hameed, 2024). There are several ways through which the credibility of the study at hand was enhanced. Members verified the data and the researcher's interpretations (Hossain et al., 2024). This means that the findings and participants' thoughts were in sync and that the perceptions were not misplaced.

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As Hossain et al (2024) Close comparison of responses between teacher and learner respondents, multiple reading of the interview data and correspondence of the emerging themes with the study focus and the existing literature were considered to boost the credibility of the research. Since the study was mainly founded on semi-structured interviews, the findings are given in the form of lived experiences of the subjects, and not as statistically generalisable data. This provided reliable and honest findings that illustrated the complexity of the problems that the teachers were concerned about. Participation and observation over an extended period also contributed to credibility. The researcher spent considerable time in the field with the participants, observing and evaluating the teaching practices and the school (Naeem et al., 2024). This provided the researcher with the context and the ability to capture the views of the participants, which enhanced the credibility of the study.

3.9.3 Transferability

Applied to other contexts, a study is transferable (Pham, 2024). Qualitative researchers give detailed explanations of the research setting, participants, and findings to enable other researchers and practitioners to use them. The researcher detailed the Dzondo Circuit's socioeconomic, cultural, and rural education challenges. The researcher gave context to assess the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings. Additionally, intentional sampling boosted transferability. The researcher chose participants with comprehensive and relevant data to ensure the findings were typical of Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 rural school teachers. The findings were more applicable to similar rural education environments.

3.9.4 Dependability

Research dependability involves stability and consistency across time (Proctor, 2024). It checks if the study process is reasonable, traceable, and well-documented so that other researchers may repeat it and achieve similar results. This study documented research

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design, data collection, analysis, and decision-making for dependability. The audit trail allows others to review the study process, assuring excellent, transparent methodology and findings.

An external qualitative research peer or expert checked the study's methods and conclusions for consistency and reliability (Reyes, 2021). An external audit examined the study methodology and confirmed accurate results.

3.9.5 Confirmability

Confirmability assesses how much participants and data impact a study's results rather than the researcher's biases, intentions, or prejudices (Tomás & Bidet, 2023). It assures impartial study findings that accurately represent participants' perspectives. The researchers might critically review their role in the study process and how their history, attitudes, and assumptions influenced the findings through reflexivity (Bell, 2022). Triangulation helped the researcher corroborate findings from several data sources and perspectives (Dang, 2024). Research decisions and procedures were audited to link results to source data. This ensured data-driven findings that reflected participants' views rather than those of the researchers.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.10.1 Informed Consent

According to the principles of informed consent, participants must have knowledge of the research, its purpose, the processes involved, and any associated risks and benefits prior to participation (Fife & Gossner, 2024). Data collection commenced only after all study participants provided informed consent. The researcher ensured that participants had access to a succinct description of the study's objectives, the participants' roles, and the participants' rights, including the right to withdraw without any consequences. Participants were given an opportunity to read the consent form before signing it, and to

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ask questions and reflect on their participation. This demonstrated that the participants were fully consenting, thus upholding the ethical integrity of the study.

3.10.2 Avoiding Harm

Another ethical concern in human research is harm prevention. Physical, psychological, emotional, and social harm can ensue (Hameed, 2024). The researcher took several efforts to protect study participants. First, the interview questions were non-intrusive and compassionate, avoiding unpleasant topics. The researcher was educated in ethical interviews and might assist distressed individuals in getting counselling.

Confidentiality safeguarded participants from social and professional harm. Researchers protected data and anonymised participants in experiments and publications. These measures were taken to keep participants safe and healthy throughout the research.

3.10.3 Ensuring Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the agreement not to expose participants' names without permission (Hossain, 2024). The names, schools, and other identifying information of participants were anonymised in this study. The researcher protected participants' identities with pseudonyms in data transcripts and reports. The researcher and academic team had password-protected access to all material, including audio recordings and transcripts.

Participants were also advised about confidentiality and assured that their data would not be shared with anybody outside the study team. Confidentiality helped participants feel comfortable and speak honestly throughout interviews.

3.10.4 Ensuring Anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity include hiding participants' identities from the researcher (Mannheimer, 2024). In this study, participants were given pseudonyms, and data were

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anonymised. Since teachers disclosed sensitive professional experiences and their work challenges, this study demanded anonymity.

The researcher removed participants' identities from the data to reduce professional and social shame. Since their responses could not be tracked, participants were encouraged to discuss freely about their experiences.

3.10.5 Avoiding Deception

To prevent research fraud, inform participants of the study's purpose, methods, and data use (Modugno, 2024). The researcher informed participants and collected data honestly in this study. Participants understood the study's aims and data handling. The researcher avoided misrepresenting or missing essential components that may change participants' study knowledge. Research ethics require honesty and transparency for informed and voluntary consent.

3.11 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 included the research method and methodology utilised to analyse Dzondo Circuit Grade 12 rural school teachers' difficulties. The chapter established the research strategy, target population, sampling technique, data collection instruments, and analytic methods. It showed why a qualitative case study design fits the interpretivist philosophy and research environment.

The chapter also described and supported thematic analysis for data theme discovery and interpretation. This study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability methods were also reviewed. The chapter finished with research ethics, including informed consent, harm avoidance, confidentiality, anonymity, and dishonesty.

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Chapter 3 was prepared for a serious, ethical, and scientific study of these problems. This chapter's focus on procedure and ethics prepared the findings for further analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter illustrates, interprets and describes the qualitative data retrieved following semi-structured interviews with Grade 12 teachers and learners of selected rural schools in Dzondo Circuit, Vhembe District. The case study design of the study analysed the data collected using qualitative methods. The chapter outlines the primary themes that emerged in the narratives of the participants such as teaching and learning challenges, parental involvement, learner involvement, support needs, improvement and positive teaching experiences in the rural schools. The themes and sub-themes are tabulated and a few of the answers of sampled participants are used to demonstrate the meanings which are attached to these experiences. The interpretation is conducted on the foundation of interpretation, rather than being conducted by measuring numbers and thus, the qualitative character of the study is preserved. In this research the type of research selected was a qualitative research that utilizes the interpretivist paradigm. The approach was appropriate as the purpose of the research was to elicit the lived experiences, the perceptions and meanings of teaching and learning problems in rural schools in Dzondo Circuit, Vhembe district. The methodological foundation of qualitative inquiry was suitable since the study was done on the personal experience of the respondents, and was not

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quantifiable. This paradigm led to a qualitative study of these teachers' complicated and context-specific issues.

4.2 PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF COLLECTED DATA

This section presents, analyses, and interprets the data collected through semi-structured interviews. This study further presents biographical information of research participants as well as data collected by the researcher through semi-structured interviews from selected participants, who are teachers and learners within the Dzondo Circuit. The background information of the qualitative results has been provided by placing the biographical information of the participants in a table format. The table is observatory to show what kind of participants it has and the fact that it is not a statistical analysis. Each table has a qualitative commentary where the background data of the participants are related to the interpretation of the results of the interview.

4.2.1 Section A: Biographical Information of Research Participants

This section presents information collected to comprehend teachers' and learners' biographical information. This information is imperative for understanding the type of participant, including gender, age, race and grade.

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Table 4.1: Biographical Information of Research Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race	Subject Specialisation	Occupation	Learners Grade
T 1	62	Male	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T 2	43	Female	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T 3	54	Male	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T 4	29	Female	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T 5	32	Male	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T6	44	Male	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T7	54	Female	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T8	48	Female	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T9	39	Female	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	
T10	41	Female	African	Tshivenda	Teacher	

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4.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted, and patterns were identified and organised into themes aligned with the research objectives. This part will bring together the opinions of the ten teachers to give a coherent account of the findings.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Rural Schools

To understand the difficulties experienced in the teaching of in rural schools, participants were asked the following question*: "What are the challenges teachers encounter in rural schools?"* Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, 10 teachers responded and gave several responses, which made the following 22 subthemes:

- *Lack of updated textbooks and teaching aids. (T1)*
- *Poverty-related issues (hunger, absenteeism, child labour). (T1)*
- *Learners' low self-esteem due to social inequalities. (T1)*
- *Limited counselling services for emotional. (T1)*
- *"Lack and shortage of books. (T2)*
- *Socio-economic factors. (T2)*
- *To give each learner individual attention in big classes. (T3)*
- *Have many examples of successful people in their community. (T3)*
- *"...insufficient materials, technology. (T4)*
- *Overcrowded classrooms. (T4)*
- *Difficult to provide individualised attention and support. t(T4)*
- *Teachers lack textbooks. (T6)*
- *An overcrowded classroom. (T6)*
- *Hard for the teachers to give learners individual attention. (T6)*
- *Limited resources. (T7)*

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- *Poor access to technology. (T7)*
- *Limited parental involvement in their children's education. (T7)*
- *Lack of teaching materials. (T8)*
- *Language proficiency gaps. (T8)*
- *Insufficient professional development specific to (T8)*
- *"Lack of teaching materials. (T9)*
- *Learners who are unable to read and write. (T9)*

The respondents gave specific answers to the questions on the issues being encountered in the Grade 12 rural classes. Their responses were then thematically analyzed to group into similar sub-themes and they included lack of teaching and learning material, overcrowded classes, lack of parental support, socio-economic factors that affected the learners, language barrier and institutional lack of support. These sub-themes are qualitatively discussed in that way reflecting the way teachers live and perceive the problems of teaching and learning in rural schools.

These responses suggested that the challenges were not isolated but interconnected. After comparing similarities in meaning, the responses were organised into the following sub-themes:

Table 4.2: Themes Emerging from Teachers' Experiences of Challenges in Rural Schools

Sub-theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number Of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Lack of teaching and learning materials	T1, T2, T4, T6, T7, T8, T9	7	70%
Overcrowding & limited individual support	T3, T4, T6	3	30%
Socio-economic & psychosocial learner barriers	T1, T2, T7	3	30%

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Language proficiency difficulties	T8, T9	2	20%
Insufficient professional development	T8	1	10%

In this table, qualitative themes that emerged during the responses of the participants are indicated. The table does not intend to quantify the responses but to sort the main ideas expressed by the respondents and help to interpret the results in terms of the themes.

Note: Occasionally, participants mentioned more than a single challenge in their answers. The table is not thus employed to statistically quantify the number of responses but to categorize recurrent qualitative concepts.

- **Lack of teaching and learning materials**

Teachers repeatedly referred to shortages of textbooks, teaching aids, and technology. Participants indicated that they were forced to improvise lessons due to the absence of appropriate resources.

- **Overcrowding and limited individual support**

Teachers explained that large class sizes made it difficult to provide individual attention, monitor learner progress and support struggling learners.

- **Socio-economic and psychosocial barriers**

Participants described learner poverty, absenteeism, low self-confidence, weak parental involvement and limited counselling support. These conditions affected learner participation and readiness to learn.

- **Language proficiency challenges**

Some teachers reported that learners were unable to read and write adequately, which slowed lesson progression and affected comprehension.

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- **Insufficient professional development**

Teachers indicated that they lacked specialised training in teaching effectively. Although five sub-themes were identified, analysis shows that they function as parts of a single underlying condition rather than independent challenges.

The shortage of materials restricts teaching methods and prevents meaningful reading and writing practice. Because learners cannot interact with texts, they struggle to develop language competence. This weakness becomes more visible in overcrowded classrooms where teachers cannot provide corrective feedback. As a result, learners remain passive and disengaged.

Socio-economic conditions intensify this situation. Hunger, absenteeism and low confidence reduce learner participation. When learners are already struggling emotionally and academically, the absence of learning materials and individual support further lowers engagement. Consequently, language proficiency problems emerge as an outcome rather than a separate cause.

Professional development also relates to this pattern. Even trained teachers cannot apply appropriate language teaching strategies when classes are overcrowded and resources are unavailable. Therefore, training limitations do not operate independently but are constrained by teaching conditions. While several challenges were reported, the analysis indicates that the dominant underlying challenge is a structural resource deprivation in the rural schooling environment.

The responses suggest that teachers are not primarily struggling with the language itself, but with teaching under conditions that prevent effective language learning from taking place. The absence of materials reduces instructional quality, overcrowding prevents support, and socio-economic pressures weaken learner readiness. Together, they create a learning environment in which both teachers and learners lower expectations.

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The theme, therefore, shows that the challenges experienced by teachers are systemic rather than individual. The problem lies less in teacher competence or learner ability and more in the structural conditions under which teaching occurs. Resource deprivation operates as the central constraint that produces additional pedagogical and psychological difficulties, ultimately affecting learner performance in rural schools.

The majority indicated that the shortage of teaching materials and socio-economic learner challenges are the most serious barriers affecting teaching and learning in rural Grade 12 classrooms.

This is supported by the following statements:

> *"Lack of updated textbooks and teaching aids, together with poverty-related issues such as hunger, absenteeism and child labour, affect learning. Learners also suffer from low self-esteem because of social inequalities, and there are limited counselling services and career guidance in mother tongue contexts."* (T1)

> *"Teachers find it difficult to give each learner individual attention in overcrowded classrooms, and this makes it difficult to empower learners academically and socially because many learners require additional support."* (T3)

- **Finding**

The analysis shows that the various reported problems (lack of books, overcrowding, weak learner participation, low confidence, absenteeism, and limited training) are not separate challenges. They all originate from one underlying condition. Rural teachers are primarily affected by structural resource deprivation, which produces additional pedagogical and learner-related difficulties. Because teaching materials and supportive conditions are inadequate:

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- Teachers cannot provide individual support,
- Learners cannot practise reading and writing effectively,
- Overcrowding prevents interaction,
- Socio-economic pressures reduce learner readiness,
- Language proficiency declines,
- The motivation of both teachers and learners decreases.

Therefore, poor teaching and learning outcomes are not mainly caused by teacher incompetence or learner inability, but by the teaching environment that prevents effective language instruction. The dominant finding is that shortages of resources create a chain reaction of pedagogical and psychosocial barriers that collectively undermine teaching and learning in rural schools.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Role of Parents in Supporting Teaching and Learning

To understand the role played by parents in supporting teaching and learning in rural schools, participants were asked the following question: *"What role do parents play in supporting teaching and learning in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity which were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, the teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Parents lay the foundation for learning by exposing children at home (T1)
- Parents' role is minimal due to illiteracy and limited schooling (T2)
- Parents provide cultural motivation but limited academic support (T3)
- Some assist in reading and writing, while others do not (T4)
- Assist with homework and projects (T5)
- Some discourage learning and prioritise other subjects (T6)

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- Help learners with homework and activities (T7)
- Must speak at home to develop language skills (T8)
- Ensure school attendance and fundraising support (T9)
- Many parents are uninvolved due to work demands or value English more (T10)

Teachers reported that some parents are actively promoted through communication, storytelling and homework assistance, while others discourage the subject or cannot assist because of illiteracy and work responsibilities. These responses suggested that parental involvement is inconsistent and operates differently across households.

After comparing similarities in meaning, the responses were organised into the following sub-themes:

Table 4.3: Role Parents Play in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools

Sub-theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Home language reinforcement	T1, T3, T8	3	30%
Academic support (homework/help)	T4, T5, T7, T9	4	40%
Negative attitudes t	T6, T10	2	20%
Limited involvement due to socioeconomic factors	T2, T10	2	20%

Note: Participants could mention more than one issue; therefore, totals exceed the number of participants.

- **Home language reinforcement**

Teachers explained that parents are introduced in early childhood through communication and cultural practices. This strengthens language familiarity and confidence.

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- **Academic support**

Some parents assist learners directly with homework and school activities, improving learner engagement.

- **Negative parental attitudes**

Certain parents discourage their children because they view English as more useful, reducing learner motivation.

- **Limited parental involvement**

Illiteracy and work commitments prevent parents from supporting learning.

- **Analytical interpretation**

Although four sub-themes were identified, they function as parts of a single underlying condition; the home environment determines the learner's academic orientation toward the language.

Where the home reinforces, learners participate confidently. Where the home neglects or rejects, learners disengage from the subject. Parental perception, therefore, shapes learner motivation before classroom teaching begins. Teachers must first overcome home-based attitudes before instruction can be effective.

- **Supporting quotations**

"They lay the foundation for learning by providing first exposure to." (T1) "Parents do not encourage their children to study." (T6)

- **Finding**

➢ The analysis shows that the various forms of parental involvement (support, discouragement, or absence) originate from one underlying condition, the perceived value within the home environment.

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- Therefore, learner engagement is primarily socially determined rather than classroom determined.
- Positive home reinforcement promotes participation, while negative or absent support undermines learning regardless of classroom instruction.
- The dominant finding is that parental attitudes toward the importance of acting as the primary mediator of learner motivation and participation in rural schools.

4.3.3 Theme 3: How Challenges Hinder Learning in Rural Schools

To understand how the previously identified challenges affect learning in rural schools, participants were asked the following question: *"How do these challenges hinder the progress of learning in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave the following responses:

- Contextualised teaching is required (T1)
- Workshops on modern methodologies (T2)
- ICT integration training (T2)
- Curriculum interpretation sessions (T2)
- Pedagogy and language enrichment workshops (T3)
- Workshops for teachers (T4)
- Curriculum content training (T5)
- Improved teaching methods training (T6)
- Language support training (T7)
- Training on the use of technology and fun teaching approaches (T9)
- Digital literacy programmes (T10)
- Teachers consistently linked learner difficulty to the need for professional support rather than learner ability.

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After comparing similarities in meaning, the responses were organised into the following sub-themes:

Table 4.4: Challenges Hindering the Progress of Learning in Rural Schools

Sub-theme	Teachers	Number	Percentage
Professional development and workshops	T2, T3, T4, T5, T6	5	50%
Pedagogical and curriculum support	T1, T2, T7	3	30%
Technology integration training	T2, T9, T10	3	30%

Note: Participants could mention more than one issue; therefore, totals exceed the number of participants.

- **Professional development and workshops**

Teachers repeatedly indicated the need for training workshops. This shows that classroom challenges hinder learning because teachers feel insufficiently equipped with effective teaching strategies. Without updated pedagogical skills, lessons remain teacher-centred and do not actively engage learners.

- **Pedagogical and curriculum support**

Teachers emphasised the need to adapt the curriculum to local contexts. This suggests that the curriculum becomes difficult for learners not because of complexity but because it lacks contextual relevance. When content does not reflect learners' lived experiences, comprehension declines.

- **Technology integration training**

Teachers associated learning difficulties with a lack of digital teaching skills. Technology is seen as a motivational and engagement tool; without it, lessons appear outdated, and learners disengage from the subject.

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Although three sub-themes were identified, they represent one underlying condition: instructional capacity limitation.

The challenges do not hinder learning directly. Instead, they limit teachers' ability to present content in ways learners can understand. Lack of training reduces teaching effectiveness, lack of contextual adaptation reduces meaning, and lack of technology reduces engagement. Together, they produce weak learner participation and understanding.

Thus, learning difficulties are not primarily learner-based but instruction-based.

- **Finding**

The analysis shows that the reported barriers to learning originate from insufficient instructional support systems. Teachers require continuous pedagogical, curriculum and technological development to translate content into meaningful learning experiences.

Therefore, the dominant finding is that learning difficulties arise from limited teacher instructional capacity rather than learner inability.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Strategies to Enhance Teaching and Learning Outcomes in Rural Schools

To determine possible ways of improving teaching and learning outcomes in rural schools, participants were asked the following question: **"***What strategies can be implemented to enhance teaching and learning outcomes in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity which were grouped into sub-themes.

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In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Parents encourage learners to take the subject seriously (T1)
- Learners gain confidence when supported at home (T2)
- Motivation improves academic performance (T3)
- Parental involvement bridges literacy gaps (T4)
- No response recorded (T5)
- Lack of parental support leads to negative behaviour (T6)
- Parental monitoring improves attendance (T7)
- Practice at home strengthens learning (T8)
- Academic success linked to parental support (T9)
- Positive motivation from family improves results (T10)

Teachers explained that learner performance improves when the home environment supports learning activities. However, where parents are not involved, learners show low motivation and negative attitudes towards the subject.

Table 4.5: Sub-themes Emerging from Strategies Implemented to Enhance Teaching and Learning Outcomes in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Parental involvement and motivation	T1, T2, T3, T8, T9, T10	6	60%
Behaviour and attendance improvement	T7	1	10%
Bridging literacy gaps	T4	1	10%
Negative effects of poor parental support	T6	1	10%

Note: Participants could mention more than one strategy; totals exceed number of participants.

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- **Parental involvement and motivation**

Teachers consistently indicated that parental encouragement creates interest and confidence in learners when parents value education and encourage their children at home to participate actively in classroom activities.

- **Behaviour and attendance improvement**

Monitoring by parents improves discipline and school attendance, which indirectly supports learning continuity and academic progress.

- **Bridging literacy gaps**

Parental assistance helps learners overcome foundational literacy weaknesses, enabling them to understand classroom instruction more easily.

- **Negative parental attitudes**

Where parents undervalue, learners develop negative perceptions and disengage from learning activities.

Although four sub-themes were identified, they all point to a single underlying condition: learning effectivene ss is shaped before classroom instruction begins. The home environment influences learner attitudes, confidence, and readiness to learn. Teachers, therefore, depend on parental reinforcement for classroom teaching to succeed. When this reinforcement is absent, instructional effort becomes insufficient.

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- **Finding**

The analysis shows that strategies suggested by teachers originate from one dominant factor, the home learning environment. The dominant finding is that strengthening parental involvement enhances learner motivation, behaviour, confidence and ultimately academic performance in rural schools.

4.3.5 Theme 5: How Challenges Hinder Learners' Progress in Learning in Rural Schools

To understand how the identified challenges affect learners' progress in learning in rural schools, participants were asked the following question: *"In what ways do these challenges hinder learners' progress in learning in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Lack of textbooks wastes learning time (T1)
- Learners struggle with comprehension and writing (T2)
- Curriculum coverage becomes limited (T3)
- Learners lose interest in the subject (T4)
- No clear response recorded (T5)
- Weak language foundation slows learning (T6)
- Learners cannot practice reading effectively (T7)
- Low motivation affects progress (T8)
- Learners become academically discouraged (T9)
- Loss of confidence and participation (T10)

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Teachers reported that when learners lack practice opportunities and adequate support, they struggle to understand lessons and gradually disengage from the subject.

Table 4.6: Sub-themes Emerging from Ways in which Challenges Hinder Learners' Progress in Learning in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Reduced language proficiency	T2, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10	6	60%
Limited curriculum coverage	T1, T3	2	20%
Loss of learner motivation	T4, T8	2	20%

Note: Participants could mention more than one challenge; totals exceed number of participants.

- **Reduced language proficiency**

Teachers indicated that learners struggle to read, write and interpret due to limited practice and support. This weak foundation prevents learners from understanding higher-level concepts.

- **Limited curriculum coverage**

Because teachers must repeatedly reteach basic concepts, progression through the syllabus slows down, and advanced content cannot be reached.

- **Loss of learner motivation**

Continuous difficulty leads learners to develop negative attitudes toward the subject, resulting in reduced participation.

The sub-themes reveal a sequential learning breakdown. Weak proficiency delays curriculum progression, delayed progression causes frustration, and frustration reduces motivation. The problem, therefore, develops cumulatively rather than instantly.

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- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that learning challenges accumulate over time, leading to progressive academic underachievement in rural schools.

4.3.6 Theme 6: Challenges Teachers Encounter in Supporting Learners' Academic, Educational and Personal Growth

To understand the difficulties teachers, experience when supporting learners holistically, participants were asked the following question: *"What challenges do teachers encounter in supporting learners' academic, educational, and personal growth in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Large classes make individual support difficult (T1)
- Learners experience emotional and social problems (T2)
- Diverse learning needs require more attention (T3)
- Shortage of learning materials limits support (T4)
- Limited teaching resources restrict assistance (T5)
- Overcrowded classrooms prevent individual attention (T6)
- Behavioural problems require extra time (T7)
- Teachers try to build inclusive environments (T8)
- Workload too heavy for effective learner support (T9)
- Lack of role models affects learner development (T10)

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Teachers explained that they are required to support learners academically and emotionally, yet classroom conditions and limited resources prevent meaningful individual attention.

Table 4.6: Sub-themes Emerging from Challenges Teachers Encounter in Supporting Learners' Academic, Educational, and Personal Growth in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Overcrowding and workload	T1, T3, T6, T7, T9	5	50%
Resource limitations	T4, T5	2	20%
Socio-emotional learner needs	T2, T8, T10	3	30%

Note: Participants could mention more than one challenge; totals exceed number of participants.

- **Overcrowding and workload**

Teachers indicated that large class sizes and diverse learner needs require more attention than they can provide. As a result, individual support becomes limited and struggling learners are overlooked.

- **Resource limitations**

Lack of materials and teaching aids restricts teachers' ability to provide remedial and enrichment support to learners.

- **Socio-emotional learner needs**

Teachers must address emotional, behavioural and social problems in addition to teaching, reducing time available for academic support.

Although the challenges appear different, they collectively point to a single condition: teachers are expected to fulfil multiple roles simultaneously. Overcrowding increases

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workload, workload reduces individual support, and limited resources prevent alternative support strategies. Consequently, both academic and personal learner development become constrained.

- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that holistic learner support is limited by classroom conditions, particularly overcrowding combined with insufficient resources, which prevent teachers from effectively addressing learners' academic and personal needs.

4.3.7 Theme 7: Challenges Teachers Face When Empowering Learners in Rural Schools

To explore the difficulties teachers experience when empowering learners, participants were asked the following question: *"What challenges do teachers face when empowering learners in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Lack of learning opportunities limits empowerment (T1)
- Cultural expectations restrict participation (T2)
- Limited exposure to academic activities (T3)
- Weak parental support affects confidence (T4)
- Learners prefer English over (T5)
- Inadequate school infrastructure (T6)
- Limited encouragement at home (T7)
- Overcrowding reduces participation (T8)

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- Few successful role models (T9)
- Learners view as less important (T10)

Teachers explained that learners tend to disengage when they do not perceive the subject as meaningful or beneficial for their future.

Table 4.7: Sub-themes Emerging from Challenges Teachers Face when Empowering Learners in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Limited opportunities and exposure	T1, T3, T6, T9	4	40%
Parental and social influence	T2, T4, T7	3	30%
Negative attitudes toward	T5, T10	2	20%
Classroom participation barriers	T8	1	10%

Note: Participants could mention more than one challenge; totals exceed the number of participants

- **Limited opportunities and exposure**

Teachers indicated that the lack of academic enrichment activities and infrastructure prevents learners from developing confidence and competence in the subject.

- **Parental and social influence**

Home environment and cultural expectations shape learners' willingness to participate and value the subject.

- **Negative attitudes**

When learners believe the subject is less useful than English, they disengage from learning activities.

- **Classroom participation barriers**

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Overcrowded classrooms limit active participation and reduce opportunities for learners to express themselves.

- **Synthesis**

Although four sub-themes were identified, they collectively show that learner empowerment depends on perceived relevance and opportunity. When learners lack exposure, support and motivation, they do not actively participate. Without participation, empowerment cannot occur. Thus, empowerment is socially and contextually constructed rather than purely instructional.

- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that learner empowerment is limited when the subject is perceived as socially and economically irrelevant and when opportunities for active participation are restricted.

4.3.8 Theme 8: Support Teachers Need to Deliver Lessons Effectively in Rural Schools

To determine the type of support required for effective teaching, participants were asked the following question: *"What support do teachers need to deliver lessons effectively in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Provision of textbooks and teaching aids (T1)
- Training workshops and mentoring (T2)

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- Language-specific teaching materials (T3)
- Infrastructure such as libraries (T4)
- Teaching aids and charts (T5)
- Community and parental support (T6)
- Subject advisor guidance (T7)
- Parental involvement in learning (T8)
- Continuous professional development (T9)
- Access to technology and digital resources (T10)

Teachers explained that effective lesson delivery requires both physical resources and professional guidance, and that teaching becomes difficult when these are unavailable.

Table 4.8: Sub-themes Emerging from the Support Teachers Need to Deliver Lessons Effectively in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Teaching and learning materials	T1, T3, T4, T5, T10	5	50%
Professional development and mentoring	T2, T7, T9	3	30%
Community and parental support	T6, T8	2	20%

Note: Participants could mention more than one need; totals exceed number of participants

- **Teaching and learning materials**

Teachers indicated that textbooks, charts, libraries and technology are necessary for meaningful teaching. Without these resources, lessons remain abstract, and learners cannot practice language skills effectively.

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- **Professional development and mentoring**

Teachers emphasised the need for training workshops and subject guidance to improve teaching approaches and curriculum delivery.

- **Community and parental support**

Support from parents and the community extends learning beyond the classroom and strengthens learner engagement.

The sub-themes show that effective teaching depends on an interconnected support system. Materials enable teaching activity, professional development improves instructional quality, and community support sustains learner participation. When any component is missing, teaching effectiveness declines. Therefore, teaching effectiveness is systemic rather than dependent on teacher effort alone.

- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that effective teaching requires integrated support consisting of adequate resources, continuous professional development and active community involvement.

4.3.9 Theme 9: Strategies to Improve Teaching and Learning Outcomes in Rural Schools

To identify strategies that could improve teaching and learning outcomes, participants were asked the following question: *"What strategies can improve teaching and learning outcomes in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

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In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Use local cultural examples (T1)
- Reading clubs and storytelling (T2)
- Teacher workshops (T3)
- Interactive classroom activities (T4)
- Provide books and reading materials (T5)
- Community language programmes (T6)
- Group discussions (T7)
- Songs and drama activities (T8)
- Debate competitions (T9)
- Home practice activities (T10)

Teachers explained that learning improves when learners actively use the language in meaningful contexts rather than only listening to explanations in class.

Table 4.9: Sub-themes Emerging from Strategies Improving Teaching and Learning Outcomes in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Interactive teaching strategies	T4, T7, T8, T9	4	40%
Reading culture development	T2, T5	2	20%
Cultural and community integration	T1, T6, T10	3	30%
Teacher professional development	T3	1	10%

Note: Participants could mention more than one strategy; totals exceed the number of participants

- **Interactive teaching strategies**

Teachers indicated that activities such as discussions, drama, and debates encourage participation and improve language fluenc

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- **Reading culture development**

Reading clubs and access to books help learners practise the language and improve comprehension skills.

- **Cultural and community integration**

Using familiar cultural examples and involving the community make learning meaningful and relevant to learners' lives.

- **Teacher professional development**

Workshops equip teachers with improved teaching techniques that enhance classroom instruction.

The sub-themes show a shift from passive learning to active language use. When learners read, discuss, and apply in familiar contexts, engagement increases. Engagement leads to confidence, and confidence improves performance. Thus, learning outcomes improve when the language becomes a lived experience rather than a purely academic subject.

- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that teaching and learning outcomes improve when it is taught through interactive, culturally relevant, and practice-based activities.

4.3.10 Theme 10: Support Needed to Help Learners Learn More Effectively in Rural Schools

To determine how learners can be better supported in learning, participants were asked the following question: *"What can be done to support learners to learn more effectively in rural schools?"*

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Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Provide reading books (T2)
- Use competitions and rewards (T3)
- Language practice at home (T4)
- Digital learning resources (T6)
- Remedial support for struggling learners (T7)
- Cultural activities (T8)
- Vocabulary enrichment activities (T9)
- Early language foundation (T10)
- Teaching aids such as charts (T5)
- Teacher guidance and supervision (T1)

Teachers explained that learners need more opportunities to practise the language both inside and outside the classroom to improve proficiency.

Table 4.10: Sub-themes Emerging from Means of Supporting Learners to Learn More Effectively in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Provision of learning resources	T2, T5, T6	3	30%
Practice and exposure activities	T3, T4, T8, T9	4	40%
Targeted learner support	T7, T10	2	20%
Teacher guidance	T1	1	10%

Note: Participants could mention more than one support need; totals exceed the number of participants

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- **Provision of learning resources**

Teachers indicated that books, charts, and digital materials enable learners to practise reading and understanding.

- **Practice and exposure activities**

Competitions, cultural activities and home practice increase learner interaction with the language.

- **Targeted learner support**

Remedial teaching and early foundations assist struggling learners in developing basic language skills.

- **Teacher guidance**

Continuous supervision helps learners stay focused and understand tasks.

The sub-themes all address one central requirement: increased exposure to the language. Resources provide access, activities create interaction, and targeted support strengthens understanding. Together, they expand the amount of meaningful contact learners have, which improves proficiency and confidence.

- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that learners learn effectively when they experience frequent and varied exposure to the language through resources, activities and targeted support.

4.3.11 Theme 11: How Learning Promotes Collaboration in Rural Schools

To understand the collaborative value of learning, participants were asked the following question: *"How does learning promote collaboration among learners and teachers in rural schools?"*

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Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Group discussions encourage participation (T1)
- Shared cultural identity promotes cooperation (T2)
- Community activities strengthen teamwork (T3)
- Classroom interaction improves relationships (T4)
- Teacher guidance supports teamwork (T5)
- Shared language improves communication (T6)
- Learners support each other academically (T7)
- Peer learning activities (T8)
- Cultural events bring learners together (T9)
- Presentations and debates build collaboration (T10)

Teachers explained that learners interact more freely when using a familiar language, which encourages participation and cooperation.

Table 4.11: Sub-themes Emerging from Promoting Collaboration among Learners and Teachers in Rural Schools by Learning from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Peer learning and group interaction	T1, T7, T8, T10	4	40%
Shared cultural identity	T2, T6, T9	3	30%
Community and classroom activities	T3, T4	2	20%
Teacher facilitation	T5	1	10%

Note: Participants could mention more than one collaborative process; totals exceed the number of participants

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- **Peer learning and group interaction**

Teachers indicated that discussions and group activities enable learners to help one another understand concepts.

- **Shared cultural identity**

A common language and culture make learners comfortable expressing ideas and cooperating.

- **Community and classroom activities**

Events and classroom interaction strengthen relationships and teamwork.

- **Teacher facilitation**

Teachers guide learners in working together effectively.

The sub-themes indicate that collaboration emerges naturally when communication barriers are removed. The shared language reduces fear of participation, encourages dialogue and allows learners to support one another. Thus, collaboration is not only a teaching strategy but a consequence of learning in a familiar language

- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that learning promotes collaboration by creating a comfortable communicative environment that encourages participation and peer support.

4.3.12 Theme 12: Benefits of Learning in Rural Schools

To understand the advantages of learning in rural schools, participants were asked the following question: *"What are the benefits of learning in rural schools?"*

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Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity which were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Improves learner understanding of content (T1)
- Strengthens cultural identity (T2)
- Enhances communication skills (T3)
- Promotes confidence in learning (T4)
- Provides foundation for other subjects (T5)
- Preserves language and heritage (T6)
- Encourages participation (T7)
- Improves academic performance (T8)
- Builds respect and self-esteem (T9)
- Supports cognitive development (T10)

Teachers explained that learners understand lessons better and feel more confident when taught in a familiar language.

Table 4.12: Sub-themes Emerging from the Benefits of Learning in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Improved comprehension and academic performance	T1, T5, T8, T10	4	40%
Cultural identity and heritage preservation	T2, T6, T9	3	30%

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Confidence and participation	T3, T4, T7	3	30%

Note: Participants could mention more than one benefit; totals exceed the number of participants

- **Improved comprehension and academic performance**

Teachers indicated that learners grasp concepts more easily when taught in their home language, improving overall academic achievement.

- **Cultural identity and heritage preservation**

Learning strengthens learners' connections to their culture and preserves linguistic heritage.

- **Confidence and participation**

Learners participate more actively when they feel comfortable expressing themselves in a familiar language.

The sub-themes show that cognitive and emotional development reinforce each other. Understanding promotes confidence, increases participation, and participation improves performance. At the same time, cultural identity strengthens motivation to learn. Therefore, the benefits are both academic and personal.

- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that learning improves academic understanding while simultaneously strengthening learner identity and confidence.

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4.3.13 Theme 13: Measures Teachers Can Take to Enhance Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools

To determine what teachers themselves can do to improve learning, participants were asked the following question: *"What measures can teachers take to enhance the teaching and learning in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Use interactive teaching methods (T1)
- Integrate cultural examples (T2)
- Attend professional workshops (T3)
- Encourage classroom participation (T4)
- Provide reading and writing activities (T5)
- Use group work and discussions (T6)
- Connect lessons to community experiences (T7)
- Use storytelling techniques (T8)
- Provide continuous practice exercises (T9)
- Adapt teaching to learners' needs (T10)

Teachers indicated that teaching improves when instruction is adapted to learners' experiences and encourages active participation.

Table 4.13: Sub-themes Emerging from Measures that Teachers Take to Enhance the Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools from Responses

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Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Interactive and learner-centred teaching	T1, T4, T6	3	30%
Cultural and contextual teaching	T2, T7, T8	3	30%
Practice and literacy development	T5, T9	2	20%
Professional growth and adaptation	T3, T10	2	20%

Note: Participants could mention more than one measure; totals exceed the number of participants

- **Interactive and learner-centred teaching**

Teachers indicated that discussions and group activities increase learner participation and understanding.

- **Cultural and contextual teaching**

Connecting lessons to learners' lived experiences makes learning meaningful and relevant.

- **Practice and literacy development**

Regular reading and writing activities strengthen language competence.

- **Professional growth and adaptation**

Teachers improve teaching quality by adapting strategies and attending training opportunities.

The sub-themes collectively suggest that effective teaching depends on relevance and engagement. When learners interact with meaningful content and practise regularly, understanding improves. Teacher adaptation ensures instruction matches learner needs. Therefore, improvement comes from transforming teaching from passive explanation to active learning.

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- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that teaching effectiveness improves when teachers adopt interactive, contextual and practice-oriented approaches that respond to learner needs.

4.3.14 Theme 14: Positive Experiences of Teachers Teaching in Rural Schools

To explore the rewarding aspects of teaching, participants were asked the following question: **"***What positive experiences do teachers encounter when teaching in rural schools?"*

Ten teachers responded to the question and provided varied but related answers. Although the responses appeared different at the surface level, they revealed patterns of similarity that were grouped into sub-themes.

In response to the above question, teachers gave several responses, which made the following sub-themes:

- Pride in promoting home language (T1)
- Strong relationships with learners (T2)
- Learners show appreciation (T3)
- Enjoyment of cultural teaching activities (T4)
- Seeing learner improvement (T5)
- Preserving language and heritage (T6)
- Increased learner participation (T7)
- Teaching familiar cultural content (T8)
- Improved learner confidence (T9)
- Personal job satisfaction (T10)

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Teachers indicated that, despite challenges, teaching provides emotional and professional fulfilment because they contribute to learners' development and cultural preservation.

Table 4.14: Sub-themes Emerging from Positive Experiences Teachers Encounter when Teaching in Rural Schools from Responses

Sub-Theme	Teachers (Codes)	Number	Percentage
Learner development and progress	T3, T5, T7, T9	4	40%
Cultural preservation and pride	T1, T4, T6, T8	4	40%
Professional satisfaction and relationships	T2, T10	2	20%

Note: Participants could mention more than one positive experience; totals exceed the number of participants

- **Learner development and progress**

Teachers experience satisfaction when learners participate more actively and demonstrate improvement in language skills and confidence.

- **Cultural preservation and pride**

Teaching allows teachers to maintain cultural heritage and promote the value of the home language.

- **Professional satisfaction and relationships**

Positive relationships with learners and appreciation from learners provide emotional reward and motivation.

The sub-themes indicate that teacher motivation is not primarily driven by material conditions but by meaningful impact. Observing learner growth, preserving culture and

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building relationships provide intrinsic professional fulfilment. These experiences counterbalance the challenges faced in rural schools.

- **Finding**

The dominant finding is that teachers derive professional satisfaction from contributing to learner development and cultural preservation, which sustains their commitment despite challenging working conditions.

4.4 INTEGRATED SYNTHESIS OF THEMES

The analysis of the fourteen themes reveals that the teaching and learning in rural schools is shaped by an interconnected system of structural, pedagogical, social and psychological conditions rather than isolated classroom factors. The themes collectively demonstrate that learning challenges do not originate from a single source but emerge from a chain of mutually reinforcing constraints that affect teachers, learners, and the broader learning environment.

The findings show that the most immediate constraint is the shortage of teaching and learning materials. Teachers repeatedly indicated that the absence of textbooks, teaching aids and technological resources limits lesson delivery and reduces opportunities for learners to practice language skills. However, the data further reveal that resource scarcity does not operate independently. Overcrowded classrooms intensify the impact of resource shortages by preventing individual learner support. Teachers, therefore, cannot compensate for the lack of materials through additional guidance, resulting in learners developing weak language foundations.

Weak foundational competence then produces a secondary effect: slow curriculum progression. Because learners struggle with basic reading and writing skills, teachers spend extended time reteaching elementary concepts. This delays syllabus coverage and leads to academic frustration among learners. As frustration increases, motivation

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decreases, and the subject begins to be perceived as difficult and irrelevant. Consequently, the study demonstrates a cumulative learning breakdown where limited resources lead to weak proficiency, weak proficiency leads to slow progression, and slow progression leads to disengagement.

The analysis further shows that learner disengagement is reinforced by socio-economic and psychosocial conditions. Poverty, limited parental involvement and low self-esteem reduce learners' confidence to participate in classroom activities. In this context, the value of a subject becomes socially constructed. Where families and communities support the language, learners participate actively and perform better. Where the language is undervalued, learners disengage. Thus, motivation is shown to be socially influenced rather than purely academic.

Another important relationship identified in the themes concerns teacher roles. Teachers are required to perform multiple responsibilities simultaneously: teacher, counsellor, motivator and language promoter. Overcrowding, heavy workload and lack of professional support make these roles difficult to sustain. As a result, teachers experience emotional fatigue and reduced professional agency. However, the findings also indicate that teachers remain committed due to intrinsic rewards such as preserving culture and observing learner growth. Teacher motivation is therefore sustained by cultural purpose rather than working conditions.

The themes also demonstrate that effective learning occurs when there is a shift from a classroom subject to a lived language experience. Interactive teaching strategies, community participation and cultural integration increase learner engagement. When learners actively use the language in discussions, storytelling and community contexts, confidence improves, and collaboration emerges naturally. This confirms that language acquisition in rural schools depends on meaningful exposure rather than formal instruction alone.

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Limited structural support produces weak learning experiences; weak experiences create negative attitudes; negative attitudes lower performance; poor performance reinforces perceptions of subject difficulty.

4.5 OVERALL FINDING OF THE STUDY

The study finds that the challenges in teaching and learning in rural schools are systemic rather than instructional. Learning outcomes are primarily determined by the interaction between resource availability, classroom conditions, social attitudes and learner exposure to the language.

Improving performance, therefore, requires integrated intervention; providing materials alone is insufficient unless accompanied by reduced overcrowding, community support and increased opportunities for meaningful language use.

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter synthesises and interprets the key findings of the study on the challenges affecting the teaching and learning in rural Grade 12 classrooms in Dzondo Circuit. Building on the themes presented in Chapter 4, the discussion explains how structural conditions (e.g., resource availability), institutional realities (e.g., overcrowding), and pedagogical practices interact to shape learner engagement and language proficiency. The interpretation is guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to show how classroom outcomes are influenced by interconnected factors operating across the school, home, community and broader socio-economic environment. The chapter then presents the study's contributions, acknowledges limitations, offers recommendations for policy and practice, and concludes by highlighting the overall significance of the findings.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study demonstrate that the challenges affecting teaching and learning in rural Grade 12 classrooms are systemic rather than isolated instructional problems. The results indicate that learning outcomes are shaped by the simultaneous interaction of structural conditions, institutional practices, and socio-cultural influences within the educational environment. These interconnected factors influence learner engagement, teacher practices, and ultimately academic achievement.

The analysis revealed that limited teaching and learning materials, overcrowded classrooms and insufficient professional support collectively reduce teachers' ability to provide meaningful language instruction. Learners therefore struggle to develop reading and writing proficiency, resulting in slow curriculum progression and reduced motivation. These findings correspond with existing rural education research, which shows that

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resource deprivation constrains pedagogical practice and lowers educational quality (Legotlo, 2014; Maddock & Maroun, 2018).

Beyond classroom conditions, the study further identified sociolinguistic and socio-economic influences as significant determinants of learner engagement. Parental preference for English over, combined with poverty-related factors such as absenteeism and limited home support, weakens learners' confidence and participation in the subject. Consequently, learning difficulties cannot be explained only by teaching methods, but by the broader environment in which the learner develops. The findings, therefore, situate learning within a wider social context where language attitudes, economic realities and school conditions interact to shape outcomes.

The study therefore achieved its first objective by identifying structural, institutional and sociolinguistic challenges affecting teaching in rural classrooms.

5.2.1 The Interconnected Nature of Systemic Challenges

The findings strongly align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which explains learning as the product of multiple interacting environmental layers. In the present study, structural constraints such as shortages of textbooks and technology restricted instructional possibilities within the classroom (microsystem). Overcrowding and institutional workload pressures further limited individual learner support (mesosystem interaction between school structures and classroom practice). At the broader level, socio-economic conditions and resource allocation policies influenced school functioning (ecosystem), while societal perceptions about the value of indigenous languages affected learner attitudes (macrosystem).

The relationship between these layers produced a cumulative learning barrier. Resource scarcity limited practice opportunities, weak practice reduced language proficiency, and poor proficiency slowed curriculum coverage. This pattern corresponds with Legotlo

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(2014) and Maddock and Maroun (2018), who found that rural school constraints operate as a chain of disadvantage rather than separate obstacles.

The findings of the study indicate that teaching and learning difficulties in rural Grade 12 classrooms cannot be understood as isolated classroom problems but as a structurally produced educational condition. Rather than functioning independently, resource scarcity, institutional workload, socio-economic pressures and linguistic context operate as mutually reinforcing constraints that shape instructional possibilities.

From an ecological systems perspective, the classroom does not function as an autonomous pedagogical space. Instead, it reflects the cumulative influence of conditions operating across multiple environmental layers. At the micro-level, teachers attempt to implement curriculum requirements; however, the absence of materials limits the range of instructional strategies available to them. These forces are teaching to shift towards explanation-driven pedagogy rather than interaction-driven learning. Consequently, learner participation decreases not because of learner ability but because the instructional environment cannot sustain engagement.

At the meso-level, school organisational structures intensify this constraint. Overcrowded classrooms reduce the possibility of individualised feedback, which is essential for conceptual understanding in exit-level grades. The teacher, therefore, manages behaviour and syllabus coverage simultaneously, transforming teaching into administrative survival rather than knowledge facilitation. What appears as ineffective pedagogy is therefore structurally produced instructional compression.

At the exo-level, socio-economic conditions further weaken learning continuity. Limited parental academic support reduces reinforcement of school learning outside the classroom, causing the school to carry the full burden of cognitive development. This extends instructional time demands while simultaneously reducing learner preparedness. The classroom, therefore, compensates for societal inequalities rather than functioning purely as a learning site.

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Finally, at the macro-level, broader educational expectations require rural schools to achieve outcomes equivalent to urban contexts despite unequal conditions. The study, therefore, demonstrates that learner performance reflects systemic alignment rather than teacher competence alone.

The significance of this finding is that intervention strategies focused only on pedagogy are unlikely to produce meaningful improvement. Instructional change without structural adjustment merely shifts responsibility onto teachers without altering learning conditions. Improvement, therefore, requires coordinated intervention across material provision, institutional organisation and community support structures. Teaching effectiveness in rural schools is consequently an outcome of systemic coherence rather than individual teacher effort.

5.2.2 Parental Involvement and Sociolinguistic Hierarchies

The study demonstrates that parental involvement in rural Grade 12 learning cannot be interpreted merely as a behavioural variable (support vs no support). Instead, it operates within a broader sociolinguistic hierarchy that shapes learners' perceptions of the academic value of schooling itself. The data suggest that parental attitudes toward language mediate learner motivation more strongly than formal teaching practices.

Within the rural context, the home environment functions as the primary site where educational meaning is constructed. When parents perceive certain forms of knowledge or language as economically valuable, learners attach greater cognitive effort to that learning area. Conversely, when the subject is socially positioned as secondary to other forms of knowledge, learners disengage regardless of classroom instruction. The findings, therefore, reveal that motivation is socially negotiated rather than pedagogically produced.

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This relationship alters the traditional interpretation of parental involvement. The issue is not simply the absence of homework supervision or school attendance at meetings, but the transmission of value orientation. Learners internalise parental language preferences as indicators of future opportunities. As a result, participation becomes linked to perceived social mobility rather than instructional clarity. What appears as learner disinterest is therefore a rational response to perceived social reward structures.

The interaction between school and home environments produces a cognitive tension for learners. In the classroom, knowledge is presented as academically important, while in the community, its utility may be differently ranked. This misalignment weakens sustained engagement because effort allocation follows anticipated benefit. The teacher, therefore, teaches content, but the community defines its worth.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding shows that learning difficulties cannot be attributed solely to cognitive or pedagogical factors. Instead, they emerge from the alignment or misalignment between educational institutions and community meaning systems. The classroom is, therefore, a site where competing knowledge hierarchies intersect.

The implication is that improving performance requires social legitimisation of learning alongside instructional improvement. Without alignment between school expectations and community valuation, increased resources or improved teaching strategies may have a limited effect. Educational success in rural contexts thus depends on symbolic support structures as much as material ones.

The findings indicate that professional development in rural schools fails not primarily because it is unavailable, but because it is structurally misaligned with the conditions under which teaching occurs. Teachers reported receiving training; however, the training assumed instructional environments that differ significantly from their actual classrooms. The difficulty, therefore, lies in relevance rather than access.

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Professional development programmes are typically designed around ideal pedagogical conditions: manageable class sizes, sufficient learning materials, stable learner preparedness and predictable instructional time. Rural classrooms operate under the opposite conditions. Teachers must simultaneously manage overcrowding, incomplete curriculum coverage, language mediation and learner support needs. Under such circumstances, pedagogical strategies presented in training cannot be implemented as intended. The result is not teacher resistance but pedagogical incompatibility.

This mismatch produces an important effect: teachers adapt training content informally rather than apply it directly. Teaching becomes a process of continuous improvisation in which teachers modify formal pedagogical methods to fit constrained environments. Consequently, professional expertise in rural contexts develops experientially rather than programmatically. The study therefore suggests that rural teachers possess adaptive competence, yet formal development programmes fail to recognise or build upon this competence.

From a theoretical perspective, professional development presumes transfer of practice from the training context to the classroom context. However, transfer requires environmental similarity. Where conditions differ substantially, knowledge cannot transfer linearly and must instead be reconstructed. In this study, teachers reconstruct pedagogy through contextual judgement rather than procedural application. The limitation of professional development, therefore, lies in its assumption of universal classroom conditions.

The implication is that effective teacher development in rural schools must shift from prescriptive training toward situational pedagogy support. Instead of presenting ideal teaching models, development initiatives should focus on decision-making strategies within constrained environments, for example, prioritisation, adaptation and mediation techniques. Teacher growth in rural contexts is therefore less about acquiring new methods and more about strengthening contextual instructional reasoning.

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This finding reframes the notion of teacher capacity. Rural teachers are not under-trained but differently trained relative to the demands of their environment. Improvement in teaching quality, therefore, depends on aligning professional learning with the realities of practice rather than increasing the quantity of workshops. Professional development becomes effective when it enhances teachers' ability to interpret and respond to contextual complexity.

5.2.3 The Demand for Contextualised Professional Development

The findings indicate that professional development in rural schools fails not primarily because it is unavailable, but because it is structurally misaligned with the conditions under which teaching occurs. Teachers reported receiving training; however, the training assumed instructional environments that differ significantly from their actual classrooms. The difficulty, therefore, lies in relevance rather than access.

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The implication is that effective teacher development in rural schools must shift from prescriptive training toward situational pedagogy support. Instead of presenting ideal teaching models, development initiatives should focus on decision-making strategies within constrained environments, for example, prioritisation, adaptation and mediation techniques. Teacher growth in rural contexts is therefore less about acquiring new methods and more about strengthening contextual instructional reasoning.

This finding reframes the notion of teacher capacity. Rural teachers are not under-trained but differently trained relative to the demands of their environment. Improvement in teaching quality, therefore, depends on aligning professional learning with the realities of practice rather than increasing the quantity of workshops. Professional development becomes effective when it enhances teachers' ability to interpret and respond to contextual complexity.

5.2.4 Participant-Driven Solutions as a Path to Sustainability

The study reveals that the most workable improvement strategies emerged not from formal policy prescriptions but from teachers' own adaptive practices developed within the rural context. These locally generated responses indicate that sustainability in educational improvement depends less on externally designed interventions and more on the compatibility between solutions and lived instructional conditions.

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Teachers described modifying pacing, integrating community examples, mediating language during instruction and prioritising essential concepts when curriculum coverage became unrealistic. These practices were not formally prescribed but evolved as functional responses to contextual constraints. Their effectiveness lies in their ecological fit; they operate within existing material and social conditions rather than attempting to replace them. Improvement, therefore, occurs through adjustment, not substitution.

This finding challenges the assumption that educational improvement must begin with structural reform before pedagogical change is possible. Instead, the data suggest that classrooms already contain internally generated mechanisms of stability. Teachers continuously negotiate between curriculum expectations and environmental limitations, producing workable instructional routines that maintain learning continuity despite systemic challenges.

From a knowledge perspective, participant-driven strategies represent contextual intelligence rather than informal coping. They demonstrate how professional expertise develops through interaction with the environment, learners and community expectations. Such practices are sustainable precisely because they require no additional resources to function. External interventions that ignore these embedded practices risk disrupting existing functional systems without successfully replacing them.

The implication for educational development is that policy should recognise and extend local practice rather than override it. Effective reform in rural schooling is therefore iterative: formal support strengthens practices that already operate successfully instead of introducing entirely new models. Sustainability emerges when intervention aligns with established behavioural patterns within the school community.

Consequently, recommendations arising from this study are not prescriptive solutions imposed on teachers but structured extensions of practices that have already proven viable in context. Educational improvement in rural schools is therefore most effective

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when it amplifies local capacity rather than attempting to standardise conditions that differ fundamentally from those assumed by national frameworks.

An important finding of the study is that teachers and learners themselves proposed practical solutions to overcome contextual constraints. Suggested initiatives included reading clubs, storytelling sessions, mini-libraries and community-supported learning activities. These locally generated strategies indicate that sustainable improvement can emerge from within the community rather than relying solely on external intervention.

This aligns with Engelbrecht (2020) and Maseko and Dube (2019), who found that community-centred initiatives improve participation and ownership in rural education settings. Such approaches utilise available cultural and social resources to support learning even when formal infrastructure is limited.

These findings suggest that sustainable educational improvement requires collaboration between schools and communities. When learners experience as part of everyday cultural practice rather than only a classroom subject, engagement increases and motivation improves. Participant-driven initiatives, therefore, complement formal policy interventions and provide realistic pathways for long-term improvement.

The study, therefore, identified community-based and classroom-based strategies capable of improving learning outcomes.

5.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to rural education research by reconceptualising teaching and learning challenges in rural Grade 12 classrooms as systemic interactions rather than isolated classroom deficiencies. Previous interpretations often attribute poor learner performance primarily to teacher competence, learner ability, or resource shortage as independent variables. The present study demonstrates that these factors operate relationally, forming a cumulative constraint structure in which each condition reinforces

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the effects of the others. The contribution, therefore, lies in shifting the explanation from single-cause deficit models toward an interactional understanding of rural schooling.

A second contribution concerns the role of the community in shaping educational participation. The findings show that learner motivation is not determined solely by instructional clarity or pedagogical strategy but by the social valuation of knowledge within the learner's environment. Parental involvement functions less as direct academic assistance and more as the transmission of educational meaning. The study, therefore, contributes to understanding how sociolinguistic hierarchies influence learner engagement in secondary education and explains why classroom-based interventions alone may produce limited improvement when community value systems remain unchanged.

The study further contributes to teacher development theory by demonstrating that professional competence in rural schools is adaptive rather than procedural. Teachers do not simply apply training methods but reconstruct them to fit contextual constraints. This reveals that professional development programmes designed for standardised conditions may fail in rural contexts, not because teachers lack capacity, but because the assumed implementation environment does not exist. The contribution, therefore, reframes rural teacher development as contextual decision-making expertise rather than methodological compliance.

Another contribution is methodological. By grounding analysis in teachers' lived experiences, the study highlights locally generated instructional practices as valid professional knowledge. Participant-driven strategies are shown to function as embedded solutions that sustain teaching despite systemic limitations. This extends the understanding of educational improvement by demonstrating that effective reform may emerge from strengthening existing practices rather than introducing externally designed models.

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Finally, the study contributes practically to rural education policy by identifying alignment as the central requirement for improvement. Educational outcomes depend on the coherence between resources, institutional organisation, community expectations and instructional practices. Interventions that address only one dimension are unlikely to produce sustained change. The study, therefore, provides an integrated framework for interpreting rural Grade 12 teaching challenges and guiding context-responsive support strategies.

This study contributes to knowledge in three main ways: empirical, methodological and theoretical.

Empirically, the study provides context-specific evidence on the teaching and learning in rural Grade 12 classrooms in the Dzondo Circuit. While rural education challenges in South Africa have been widely documented, limited research has focused specifically on indigenous language teaching within particular rural contexts. By documenting teachers' lived experiences, the study shows how shortages of materials, overcrowding, sociolinguistic attitudes and limited parental support interact to influence learner engagement and achievement. The findings, therefore, extend existing literature by demonstrating how language status and rural schooling conditions operate together rather than separately.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of qualitative thematic analysis in exploring complex educational realities. Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to describe experiences that would not easily emerge from quantitative surveys, particularly regarding learner motivation, confidence and attitudes toward. As noted by Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022), qualitative approaches are appropriate for examining meaning and experience, while Naeem et al. (2024) emphasise their usefulness in capturing contextualised educational processes. The study, therefore, illustrates how interpretive approaches can reveal the relationships between structural conditions and classroom practice in rural education.

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Theoretically, the study applies Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to mother-tongue instruction in a resource-constrained setting. The findings show how classroom outcomes are influenced simultaneously by microsystem factors (teaching practices), mesosystem factors (home–school relationships), ecosystem factors (institutional resources) and macrosystem factors (language status and socio-economic inequality). By linking language learning to multiple environmental layers, the study strengthens the relevance of ecological perspectives for understanding rural language education and highlights the need for coordinated, multi-level interventions.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study should be interpreted within the contextual boundaries in which the research was conducted. The investigation focused on four rural secondary schools within the Dzondo Circuit of the Vhembe District, and therefore, the results do not aim at statistical generalisation to all rural schools in South Africa. Instead, the study provides analytical insight into how teaching and learning challenges operate within a specific educational environment. The intention is conceptual transferability rather than numerical representativity.

A second limitation relates to the qualitative nature of the research design. Data were derived from participants' descriptions of their lived experiences and classroom practices. While this approach enabled an in-depth understanding of teaching realities, it depends on participant interpretation and recall. The study, therefore, does not claim to measure the frequency of challenges but to explain their meaning and interaction. The value of the findings lies in explanatory depth rather than quantifiable prevalence.

The use of semi-structured interviews also shaped the scope of the evidence. Classroom practices were examined through teacher rather than prolonged direct observation across an academic year. As a result, the study analyses perceived instructional conditions rather than continuously recorded behaviour. However, within interpretive research,

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perception forms part of educational reality because it influences decision-making and practice.

Another limitation concerns subject and contextual specificity. The linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics of the Dzondo Circuit form part of the explanation of the findings. Different rural contexts may display similar structural patterns but different manifestations. The study, therefore, does not propose identical conditions across all rural settings but identifies mechanisms that may operate in comparable environments.

The study examined teaching challenges within existing policy conditions without implementing intervention strategies to test outcomes over time. The research, therefore, explains why challenges occur rather than measuring the long-term effectiveness of solutions. Future research may extend the findings through longitudinal or intervention-based approaches.

Despite these limitations, the study offers credible insight into the relationship between classroom practice and contextual conditions in rural Grade 12 education. The purpose of the research is to deepen understanding rather than to produce universal prediction, and the findings should be applied through contextual interpretation rather than direct replication.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.5.1 Policy Recommendations

The study shows that rural teaching challenges emerge from the interaction between material conditions, institutional organisation and social valuation of learning. Improvement, therefore, requires coordination rather than isolated intervention.

First, resource provision policies should move beyond once-off distribution of materials toward stability of instructional conditions. The findings indicate that teaching

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effectiveness is reduced not only by shortages but also by the unpredictability of availability. Policy frameworks should therefore prioritise sustained access to core teaching materials and manageable class sizes within exit-level grades, as stability enables teachers to plan instructional progression rather than operate reactively.

Second, rural education policy should incorporate community alignment initiatives. Since learner motivation is shaped by the perceived value of schooling within the home environment, improvement strategies must include structured school community engagement programmes. These should not focus solely on attendance at meetings, but on strengthening the shared understanding of educational goals and expectations.

Third, professional development policy should differentiate rural and urban implementation contexts. Training programmes designed for standard classroom conditions should be adapted to include strategies for instruction under constrained environments, including prioritisation, mediation and adaptive pacing. Policy support should therefore emphasise contextual competence rather than uniform methodological compliance.

5.5.2 Practice Recommendations

At the school level, improvement depends on strengthening practices already functioning within the rural context.

Scheduling of weekly teacher collaboration meetings organized by School Management Teams should assist in lesson planning, assessment planning and student support. The district officials should provide regular subject advisory visits and curriculum support. Parents and School Governing Bodies should support attendance monitoring, homework supervision and learner motivation.

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Teachers should integrate structured language mediation strategies during instruction. Rather than treating informal language use as incidental, guided mediation can support conceptual understanding while maintaining curriculum requirements.

Schools should also develop learner support routines embedded in normal teaching time, such as brief reinforcement activities and peer-supported learning. Because extended after-school programmes may be inconsistent in rural contexts, improvement strategies should operate within existing school schedules.

Finally, schools should strengthen communication patterns with families around learning expectations and learner progress. The aim is not to transfer teaching responsibility to parents but to align learner effort with perceived educational value.

5.5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies may extend this research through comparative analysis across different rural districts to examine how similar mechanisms operate under varying socio-cultural conditions. Longitudinal research could also investigate how sustained alignment between school practices and community expectations influences learner performance over time.

Further investigation into context-responsive professional development models may provide evidence on how adaptive pedagogical support influences teaching effectiveness in resource-constrained classrooms. Intervention-based studies could test structured versions of the locally generated practices identified in this study.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study investigated the challenges experienced by Grade 12 teachers in rural schools of the Dzondo Circuit and demonstrated that teaching and learning difficulties cannot be

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explained as isolated classroom problems. Instead, they emerge from the interaction between instructional conditions, institutional organisation and community meaning systems. Classroom practice, therefore, reflects broader educational alignment rather than individual teacher effort alone.

The findings indicate that effective teaching in rural contexts depends on coherence between environment and expectation. Where curriculum demands assume conditions that do not exist, teaching shifts from knowledge facilitation to constraint management. Learner participation similarly reflects perceived social value rather than instructional clarity alone. Educational performance in this context is therefore produced by systemic compatibility rather than by single educational inputs.

The study further shows that teachers already generate workable practices that sustain learning under constrained conditions. Improvement is most likely when external support strengthens these embedded practices instead of replacing them with standardised models. Educational development in rural schools is therefore adaptive rather than prescriptive.

The research contributes to understanding rural secondary education as a relational system in which resources, organisation and social valuation operate together to shape outcomes. Addressing one dimension without the others is unlikely to produce lasting change. Sustainable improvement requires alignment across school, community and policy environments so that teaching conditions correspond with educational expectations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION

GROUND RULES

- Maximum duration of the interview per person:
- Participation consent form will be reviewed.
- The interview will be recorded.
- Participation is voluntary and based on informed consent.
- Participant's names will be anonymised and will be called T1 meaning teacher 1.
- Interviewer will ensure that every participant has a chance to talk.
- Participants' responses will be taken as they are.
- Only those participating in the interview will be allowed to contribute.

Thank you

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

Challenges of Teaching and Learning Faced by the Grade 12 Rural School Teachers at Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What biographical information would you collect from your participants?

1. Age_____
2. Gender _____
3. Grade taught_____
4. Highest qualification_____
5. Subject specialisation_____
6. Number of years teaching the subject_____
7. Post level as the subject teacher_____

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SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **What specific challenges do rural school teachers encounter within the Dzondo Circuit of the Vhembe District?**

1.1 What are the challenges Tshivenda teachers encounter in rural schools?

1.2 What role do parents play in supporting teaching and learning in Tshivenda in rural schools?

1.3 What professional development opportunities do rural school Tshivenda teachers need to enhance teaching and learning in rural schools?

1.4 How does parental support influence teaching and learning outcomes in Tshivenda in rural schools?

1.5 How do these challenges hinder the progress of learning Tshivenda in rural schools?

1.6 What are the challenges teachers encounter in supporting learners' growth, education and personal growth?

1.7 What challenges do teachers encounter when empowering learners in rural schools?

1.8 What kind of support do teachers need to efficiently deliver Tshivenda lessons in rural schools?

1.9 What strategies can be implemented to enhance teaching and learning outcomes in Tshivenda in rural schools?

1.10 What do you think can be done to support learners to learn Tshivenda efficiently in rural schools?

1.11 How does learning Tshivenda promote collaboration in rural schools?

1.12 What are the benefits of learning in Tshivenda in rural schools?

1.13 What can teachers do to enhance the teaching and learning of Tshivenda in rural schools?

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1.14 What are the positive experiences of Tshivenda teachers in Grade 12 in rural schools?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW

You have been asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. The purpose of the interview is to examine the challenges that are faced by the Grade 12 Tshivenda teachers in rural schools.

You can choose whether to participate in the one-on-one interview and stop at any time. Although the interview will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous, and no names will be mentioned in the report.

There are no right or wrong answers to the one-on-one interview questions. We want to hear from your own point of view. We hope that you can be honest, even when your responses do not align with other participants'.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above.

Signed:_____ Date:_____

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APPENDIX C: VERBATIM REPORT OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Research Title: Challenges of Teaching and Learning Faced by the Grade 12 Rural School Teachers at Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District

Data Source: Semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers (T1-T10).

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Question 1.1: What challenges do rural school teachers encounter within the Dzondo Circuit of the Vhembe District?

T1: "Lack of updated Tshivenda textbooks and teaching aids. Poverty-related issues (hunger, absenteeism, child labour). Learners' low self-esteem due to social inequalities. Limited counselling services for emotional and social development. Inadequate career guidance in mother-tongue contexts."
T2: "Lack and shortage of books in rural areas due to lack of provision of services by the department of education. Socio-economic factors, like learners needing to work and lack of home support."
T3: "Teachers find it hard to give each learner individual attention in big classes. Teachers find it hard to empower learners because they don't have many examples of successful people in their community."
T4: "...insufficient materials, technology, and overcrowded classrooms which make it difficult to provide individualized attention and support."

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T5: Tshivenda is underrated by the learners. They don't study Tshivenda because they think it is very simple because it is the language they use every day, which makes them to underperform in Tshivenda.
T6: "teachers lack Tshivenda textbooks and they are subjected in an overcrowded classrooms which makes it hard for the teachers to give learners individual attention".
T7: "teachers experience limited resources, poor access to technology and limited parental involvement in their children's education".
T8: "lack of Tshivenda teaching materials, language proficiency gaps among learners, and insufficient professional development specific to Tshivenda".
T9: "lack of teaching materials and learners who are unable to read and write Tshivenda.
T10: "Through their roles and responsibilities, teachers play a vital part in society by preparing students to become responsible, thoughtful, and informed citizens after matric".

Question 1.2: What role do parents play in supporting teaching and learning in rural schools?

T1: They lay the foundation for learning by providing love, guidance, and the first exposure to Tshivenda as a language.
T2: Parents' role is often minimal due to illiteracy or limited schooling. Some encourage home language use at home, strengthening learning. Others see English as more "useful," discouraging Tshivenda focus. Where parents actively assist (e.g., storytelling, cultural activities).
T3: Parents often provide cultural context and motivation, but may lack involvement in academic support due to low literacy or economic constraints.
T4: Some assist their learned in reading and writing whereas others are not.
T5: Assisting children with Tshivenda homework's and projects. Teaching learners how to speak and write the proper Tshivenda language.
T6: Parents do not encourage their children to study tshivenda they keep pushing their children to study all other subjects except tshivenda because they think no one can fail Tshivenda.

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T7: They engage their children in educational activities like helping them with homework's.
T8: They have to speak using Tshivenḓa at home with their children in order to foster linguistic and good Tshivenḓa reading and writing.
T9: Parents help by making sure kids go to school and sometimes help with fundraising. But some parents can't help with homework because they didn't go to school.
T10: Many parents are not involved due to illiteracy or work demands. Some support learning by ensuring homework is done. Others do not value learning in Tshivenda compared to English.

Question 1.3: How do these challenges hinder the progress of learning Tshivenda in rural schools?

T1: Contextualized Teaching meaning that Training should help teachers adapt the curriculum to the local context and incorporate local knowledge and materials to make learning more relevant for learners.
T2: Workshops on modern language-teaching methodologies. ICT integration training (using digital platforms for Tshivenda). Curriculum interpretation sessions. Peer-learning platforms for sharing best practices. Support from universities and NGOs for language preservation.
T3: Workshops on Tshivenda pedagogy, language enrichment, and training in resource limited instructional strategies.
T4: by providing workshop to teachers.
T5: They need regular workshops on curriculum content. Technology integration in Tshivenḓa language teaching and learning.
T6: They need more workshops that can improve their teaching methods
T7: Language support training on teaching methodologies that cater for Tshivenḓa speaking learners.
T8: They need more workshops that can improve their teaching methods.
T9: Teachers need training on new ways to teach and how to use technology like phones or tablets. They also need training on how to teach Tshivenda in a fun way.

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T10: Digital literacy programs for using tech in language teaching

Question 1.4: What strategies can be implemented to enhance teaching and learning outcomes in rural schools?

T1: Parent involvement motivates children to learn tshivenda, leading to higher grades. The level of involvement is crucial in producing a high impact on the student's performance.
T2: Strong parental involvement improves reading culture, learner confidence, and academic performance. Lack of support results in poor language mastery, limited vocabulary, and reduced learner engagement.
T3: Positive parental involvement improves learner motivation and language use at home, boosting academic performance.
T4: It bridges the gap of high rate of illiterate being experienced in the past.
T5: Parental support lead to positive attitudes and good behaviors of children towards Tshivenda.
T6: Parental support may lead to bad attitude and behavior of learners in Tshivenda.
T7: Promote better behavior and reduces absenteeism.
T8: Parental support can be good as it can improve academic performance in Tshivenḓa home language. As these learners stay in rural areas, this will improve knowledge of what they learn at school as it is being practised at home such Tshivenḓa proverbs.
T9: When parents support learners, they do better in school. If parents don't care, learners might not do well.
T10: Positive support improves learner motivation and performance.

Question 1.5: In what ways do these challenges hinder learners' progress in learning Tshivenda in rural schools?

T1: Lack of teaching resources in schools waste teaching and learning time, because usually learners won't be having in their possession, textbooks for example.

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T2: Inadequate resources weaken comprehension and writing skills. Negative attitudes toward Tshivenda lead to low learner motivation. Lack of exposure to literature limits critical thinking and creativity.

T3: They lead to low proficiency, reduced learner engagement, and limited curriculum coverage.

T4: The majority of learners are not interested in learning Tshivenda, and this leads to little progress.

T5: Increase learners' motivation and boost self-confidence.

T6: They hinder progress because teachers find it hard to properly equip learners and as a result, learners end up not enjoying the lessons.

T7: Rural schools lack of textbooks, technology and infrastructure making effective teaching and learning difficult.

T8: lack of teaching and learning materials such textbooks makes it difficult for learners to comprehend and gather the knowledge result in learners losing interests in Tshivenḓa.

T9: Problems like not enough resources or parent support make it hard for learners to understand Tshivenda.

T10: Poor performance due to language confusion. Learners lose confidence in using Tshivenda academically.

Question 1.6: What challenges do teachers encounter in supporting learners' academic, educational, and personal growth?

T1: Teachers face challenges like managing diverse learning styles, limited resources and time, large class sizes, and high workloads. They must also handle behavioural issues, maintain student motivation, stay current with technology, and build effective communication with parents and administrators.

T2: Poverty-related issues (hunger, absenteeism, child labor). Learners' low self-esteem due to social inequalities. Limited counselling services for emotional and social development. Inadequate career guidance in mother-tongue contexts.

T3: Balancing academic needs with socio□emotional support, addressing diverse learning abilities, and managing limited resources.

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T4: No enough relevant materials sometimes learners are not willing to learn.
T5: Poor teaching due to lack of resources.
T6: teachers encounter challenges such as insufficient materials. Lack of technology integration. And overcrowded classrooms which makes it difficult to provide individualized attention and support.
T7: Overcrowding classrooms makes it difficult for teachers to impart the lesson and provide one on one support to every learner who requires extra support.
T8: By fostering positive relationships between leaners which may result in good communication in learners. Teachers can create an inclusive and safe learning environment amongst leaners, where every learner can feel engaged in a lesson.
T9: Teachers find it hard to give each learner individual attention in big classes. They also don't have enough resources to help learners who need extra help.
T10: Few role models who have succeeded through Tshivenda.

Question 1.7: What challenges do teachers face when empowering learners in rural schools?

T1: Teachers in rural schools face challenges empowering learners due to inadequate resources, such as outdated curricula and a lack of digital tools, which hinder relevant learning. Socio-economic factors, like learners needing to work and lack of home support.
T2: Cultural practices sometimes restrict learner participation, especially for girls. Limited exposure to external opportunities. Scarcity of extracurricular activities that promote confidence in Tshivenda.
T3: Limited access to extracurricular activities and technology that could inspire learner confidence and independence.
T4: sometimes parents are not willing to give full support
T5: Learners lack interest on tshivenda as a subject which lead to low learners participation.
T6: infrastructure challenges which may make it difficult to provide quality education due to poor infrastructures

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T7: Lack of parental involvement may result to bad habits of learners not to study and enjoy Tshivenḓa as a subject in rural schools.
T8: overcrowded classrooms makes learners not to pay a full attention to the lesson as they feel less engaged and involved in the lesson.
T9: Teachers find it hard to empower learners because they don't have many examples of successful people in their community.
T10: Learners prefer English for status or future jobs. Learners feel Tshivenda is too difficult or irrelevant

Question 1.8 what kind of support do teachers need to deliver Tshivenda lessons effectively in rural schools?

T1: Teachers need comprehensive support including adequate classroom resources and technology, opportunities for effective professional development, administrative support to create a positive and inclusive school culture.

T2: Updated and sufficient teaching materials. Language laboratories or ICT tools for interactive learning. Continuous professional development. Support from curriculum advisors. Collaboration with parents and communities.
T3: Adequate teaching materials, language specific training, and mentorship programs.
T4: they should give individual attention to each leaner.
T5: Some learners have special needs they can't see properly and physically not well.
T6: they need community engagement: building relationships with local communities and parents to promote education and support.

T7: Resources and infrastructure may result in accessibility of textbooks and better infrastructure to accommodate all the learners in crowded classrooms.
T8: support from parents by engaging leaners to different activities at home which will assist them improving linguistic ability

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T9: Teachers need more books and resources in Tshivenda. They also need training on how to teach Tshivenda effectively.
T10: More textbooks and storybooks in Tshivenda.

Question 1.9 What strategies can be implemented to improve teaching and learning outcomes in Tshivenda in rural schools?

T1: Strategies to improve learning outcomes in Tshivenda in rural schools include adapting the curriculum to be locally relevant, using code-switching to bridge home and school languages, and making use of culturally responsive teaching methods.
T2: Introduce reading clubs and storytelling sessions. Encourage mother-tongue-based bilingual education. Strengthen parental involvement campaigns. Develop community libraries. Use local culture and traditions to make lessons relatable.
T3: Develop localized Tshivenda resources, conduct community language programs, and provide teacher workshops.
T4: learners must be given more books to read and more written work, debate, etc.
T5: Not enough learning materials which may lead to language difficulties to learners to comprehend information which they are being taught.
T6: community involvement: engage parents and local communities in promoting the importance of Tshivenḓa language.
T7: Cultural responsive teaching incorporate Tshivenḓa language and culture into the curriculum, making learning more relatable and engaging.
T8: Giving learners more activities to do in the classes and at home so that they can feel interested to Tshivenḓa.
T9: Teaching and learning Tshivenda can be improved by using fun methods like storytelling and getting parents involved.
T10: Introduce fun learning activities (songs, drama, debates). Encourage team teaching and resource sharing.

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Question 1.10 What can be done to support learners to learn more effectively in rural schools?

T1: Enhancing teacher training programs or workshops for Tshivenda Teachers and providing continuous professional development opportunities.
T2: Provide learner support materials in Tshivenda. Encourage writing competitions, debates, and cultural festivals. Offer remedial programs for struggling learners. Reward excellence in Tshivenda to boost motivation.
T3: Use culturally relevant content, encourage home language practice, and provide supplementary reading materials.
T4: they should be given more support by giving them more books to read, extra task and etc.
T5: Provide teaching ads like chats and auto visual
T6: providing textbooks, educational materials and digital resources in Tshivenḓa
T7: Provide Tshivenḓa language resources, teacher training and community involvement.
T8: Share the benefits of learning Tshivenḓa at school as a learner and how it can boost his vocabulary by speaking big grammar of Tshivenḓa such as proverbs.
T9: Learners can learn Tshivenda better if they have fun activities like drama and songs in Tshivenda. They also need enough Tshivenda books.
T10: Start Tshivenda from early grades consistently. Promote pride in mother tongue. Extra support for learners struggling with reading/writing.

Question 1.11 How does learning promote collaboration among learners and teachers in rural schools?

T1: Learning Tshivenda provides opportunities for pupils to work with peers to articulate their thinking, share knowledge and skills.
T2: Group discussions and oral presentations foster teamwork. Learners and teachers share proverbs, idioms, and cultural practices, reinforcing collective identity. Peer-learning builds confidence and support systems.

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T3: It fosters teamwork among learners through group activities and community projects that value indigenous language.
T4: by combining school in circuit, cluster, etc doing the same activities this will improve children's learning Tshivenda in rural schools.
T5: Regular support from the subject advisors through workshops.
T6: Learners from different backgrounds can share their knowledge and experiences fostering cross-cultural understanding appreciation.
T7: Tshivenḓa language and culture can serve a common ground, fostering a sense of shared identity and community among learners, teachers and parents.
T8: Learning Tshivenḓa can improve collaboration by improving communication and learning skills. Learners can also learn from each other. Learners do speeches as a way presentation where one learner can gain knowledge based in the topic from other learners.
T9: Learning Tshivenda helps learners work together because it's their language. They can do projects together like cultural days.
T10: Peer learning through group discussions.

Question 1.12 What are the benefits of learning in Tshivenda in rural schools?

T1: Teachers use Tshivenda to explain difficult English concepts, helping learners connect these new ideas with what they already know.
T2: Preserves cultural heritage and identity. Enhances cognitive development through mother-tongue learning. Improves comprehension of concepts before transitioning to English. Strengthens communication skills in the community.
T3: Improved cultural identity, better comprehension of local contexts, and enhanced cognitive skills in mother□tongue education.
T4: Enables learners to know their culture, origin and etc.
T5: Provide enough learning materials so that the teachers can teach learners with books in their possession.
T6: Helping to promote and preserve the Tshivenḓa language fostering a sense of pride and connection to our cultural heritage.

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T7: Improve academic performance by using mother tongue instruction which promote cultural heritage, identity and community pride.
T8: learners will understand their home language very well which will even make them gain dignity and respect from other cultures.
T9: Learning Tshivenda helps learners connect with their culture and community. It's also easier to understand things when taught in their home language.
T10: Learners understand better in their home language

Question 1.13 What measures can teachers take to enhance the teaching and learning of Tshivenda in rural schools?

T1: Teachers can enhance Tshivenda teachers in rural schools by using code-switching to connect lessons to Tshivenda Learners.
T2: Adopt learner-centred methods (role plays, debates, group projects). Incorporate local cultural knowledge into lessons. Use multimedia resources where possible. Engage with parents to build a supportive home environment.
T3: Integrate innovative teaching methods, collaborate with community elders for authentic language use, and seek continuous professional development.
T4: Ensures that all learners are able to read and write Tshivenda fluently and taking part in debating and competition.
T5: Give learners multiple tshivenda learning books so that they will be able to read with meaning.
T6: Use visual aids and resources to support learners. Make use of interactive and engaging methods.
T7: Incorporate Tshivenḓa language and culture into lessons, making learning to be related and engaging to learners.
T8: This will improve their ability to read and write Tshivenda as their home language. They will understand their cultural norms and practices very well. This will also improve their academic performance in Tshivenḓa home language.
T9: Teachers can make lessons more fun and use examples from the community. They can also involve parents more in Tshivenda learning.

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T10: Use local examples to explain concepts. Engage learners with interactive methods.

Question 1.14 What positive experiences do Grade 12 teachers have in rural schools?

T1: Through their roles and responsibilities, teachers play a vital part in society by preparing students to become responsible, thoughtful, and informed citizens after matric.
T2: Pride in learners who excel despite limited resources. Witnessing cultural appreciation among learners. Successful learners using Tshivenda as a stepping stone for university studies. Strong teacher–learner relationships in close-knit communities.
T3: Seeing learners achieve proficiency and cultural pride, and receiving community appreciation for preserving the language.
T4: Each and every learner puts all efforts into the Tshivenda language.
T5: Encourage learners to speak Tshivenda more often during breaks
T6: learners develop a deep understanding of their cultural heritage through the study of their home language.
T7: Strong relationships with parents and the Community foster a supportive environment for learners in their home language.
T8: They need community engagement: by building relationship with local community and parents education and support.
T9: Teachers like seeing learners connect with their culture through Tshivenda. They also like teaching a language that's part of who they are.
T10: Learners showing improved writing and oral skills.

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APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL

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Creating Future Leaders

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DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

CONFIDENTIAL

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RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.

1. The above bear's reference.

2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to undertake research titled: **"CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING FACED BY GRADE 12 RURAL SCHOOL TEACHERS AT DZONDO CIRCUIT IN VHEMBE DISTRICT"** has been approved.

3. The following conditions should be considered:

3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.

3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the School concerned.

3.3 The conduct of research should not in any how disrupt the academic programmes at the school(s).

3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations, especially in the fourth term.

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Tel:015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

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3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected and treated with dignity).

3.6 Upon completion of the research, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

4 Additionally, you are expected to produce this letter at School(s)/Office(s) where you intend to conduct your research as evidence that permission has been granted for access to the research site(s).

5 The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.

MC Makola PhD — **Date** 02/10/2025

Mashaba KM — **Date** 02/10/2025

DDG: CORPORATE SERVICES

Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
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APPENDIX E: ETHICAL CLEARENCE

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Mr T Nevuwari

STUDENT NO:
16006411

PROJECT TITLE: **Challenges of Teaching and Learning Faced by Grade 12 Rural School Teachers at Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District.**

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: **FHSSE/25/PCEM/02/0704**

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr SL Tshikota	UNIVEN, Professional and Curriculum Studies	Supervisor
Mr T Nevuwari	UNIVEN, Professional and Curriculum Studies	Investigator -Student

Type: **Master's Research**
Risk: ***Minimal risk to humans, animals, or the environment (Category 2)***
Approval Period: **April 2025 – April 2026**

The Research Ethics Social Science Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
  - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
  - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
  - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
  - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
  - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: April 2025

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee..... Prof M. Mwale-Manjoro

Signature.....

University of Venda
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APPENDIX F: EDITOR'S LETTER

Dr Kufakunesu Zano, PhD in English.
A member of the South African Translators' Institute,
Ref 1000686, South Africa 2026

SATI
SOUTH AFRICAN TRANSLATORS' INSTITUTE

CERTIFICATE
OF EDITING

This confirms that I edited substantively the document below, including a Reference list. The document was returned to the author with various track changes to correct errors and clarify meaning.

TITLE: Challenges of teaching and learning faced by Grade 12 rural school teachers at Dzondo Circuit in Vhembe District

AUTHOR: Tshengedzeni Nevuwari student no. 16006411

Note: The edited work described here may not be identical to that submitted. The author, at their sole discretion, have the prerogative to accept, delete, or change amendments made by the editor before submission.

DATE: 20 February 2026

EDITOR'S COMMENT

The author was advised to effect suggested corrections regarding subject-verb agreement, punctuation and overall academic writing style, to name a few.

Zano
Signature

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APPENDIX G: TURN-IT-IN REPORT

16006411 NEVUWARI T MED THESIS Final Copy 17 February 2026.docx

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