

**THE PHASING OUT OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS IN RURAL LIMPOPO SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN VHEMBE WEST DISTRICT, SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER IN EDUCATION

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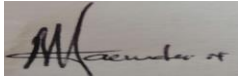
CURRICULUM STUDIES

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DECLARATION

I, Naledzani Maanda, do hereby solemnly declare that this research for Bachelor of Master in Education (guidance and counselling) at the University of Venda titled “**THE PHASING OUT OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VHEMBE WEST, LIMPOPO, IN SOUTH AFRICA**” is my own work and this document has not been previously submitted at this or any other institution, and the material contained herein has been properly acknowledged and referenced.



Naledzani Maanda

03-12- 2024

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, Tshinakaho, My beautiful wife
Tshilidzi and Sons.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In this study, I would like to acknowledge the source of my strength, the Almighty God,, and the following people who contributed to the completion of this study:

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ABSTRACT

Accounting is one of the commercial subjects that is being phased out by some of the schools in Vhembe West District. The removal of this subject by schools has a negative impact on learners who wish to pursue a career in commerce, business and accounting, and deprives learners of the knowledge and skills that are covered in those subjects. Teachers who are teaching the subjects are also affected. The aim of this study was to investigate the reasons behind the phasing out of commercial subjects. This study adopted a qualitative approach where purposive sampling of educators teaching commercial subjects, school managers and learners were interviewed, and observation techniques were used to collect data. A total of 9 school principals, 9 commercial subject teachers and 18 learners were used in this study. Data analysis was conducted using Tesch's eight steps in the coding process. The results of this study revealed that the decline of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools was influenced by a complex interplay of factors. Qualitative data analysis showed that government policies and curriculum changes shaped the availability and prioritisation of commercial subjects. School-level factors, such as leadership decisions, resource allocation, and teacher expertise, also played a significant role. Student-level factors, including interest, performance, and career aspirations, further impacted the choice of commercial subjects. Moreover, socioeconomic conditions, access to vocational training, and societal pressures influenced attitudes towards commercial subjects. While teachers generally exhibited positive attitudes towards commercial subjects, school managers maintained negative views due to factors like low performance and perceived lack of prestige. Learners also presented negative attitudes towards commercial subjects, influenced by perceived difficulty, lack of interest, or societal pressures. These interconnected factors contribute to the ongoing challenge of maintaining commercial subjects in rural secondary schools in Limpopo. These results are important to the Department of Education, School Governing Boards (SGBs), learners and society at large. Particularly, the results are useful to the Department of Basic Education since they help inform the planning, design and implementation of policies seeking to salvage the extinction of accounting subjects in rural secondary schools.

Keywords: *Further Education and Training (FET) phase, Motivation, Phasing out,*

Stream, School, Commercial Subjects, Factors, Attitudes, Rural Secondary Schools

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE-SLM:	Advanced Certificate in Education-School Leadership and
COLTS:	Culture of Learning and Teaching Services
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
ECD:	Early Childhood Development
EDTP-SETA:	Sectoral Education and Training Authority, Education Training and
EMS:	Economics and Management Sciences
FET:	Further Education and Training
GET:	General Education and Training
HODs:	Head of Departments
ICT:	Information communication technology
IQMS:	Integrated quality management systems
LARK:	Learners at Risk Policy
LDBE:	Limpopo Department of Basic Education
MoU:	Memorandum of Understanding
PLC:	Professional learning communities
POT:	Provincial organising team
ODT:	Organisation Development Theory
SACE:	South African Council for Educators
SBMA:	School-Based Management Approach
SDP:	School development plan
SIP:	School improvement plan
SLM:	School Management and Leadership
SPSS:	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences
UL:	University of Limpopo
UNIVEN:	University of Venda

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The commercial stream in schools includes Accounting, Business Studies, and Economics, all of which hold significant importance in their respective areas. Accounting plays a crucial role in everyday tasks like monthly budgeting, tracking expenses, and making investments. A skilled accountant is vital for the smooth operation of any business. Financial accounting information provides an accurate representation of a business's financial health (Basuspariene 2018:76).

Commercial subjects are essential for helping businesses remain competitive. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often struggle with accounting functions due to a lack of knowledge in accounting and business skills (Raman 2009:98). Cele (2022:2) discovered that understanding commercial subject's aids in planning and evaluating business performance while also helping to manage costs. SMEs encounter difficulties stemming from insufficient management skills, inadequate training, and a lack of management accounting information. These enterprises play a significant role in contributing to Gross Domestic Product, employment, and economic growth (Fakoti 2014:270). Even highly developed countries like Germany have faced challenges with commercial subjects, as society has historically viewed them as having a lower status compared to other academic streams. Commercial students had opportunities to visit banks but were often denied the chance to work with real accounts, actual transactions, and genuine documents, leading to a gap in knowledge and posing a risk to their success (Passant 2018:1066). Given the importance of commercial subject knowledge in reducing unemployment, there is a growing demand for individuals in this sector to possess financial literacy, management skills, and sound business practices.

Several factors contribute to the decline of commercial subjects. Mhonyiwa (2014:91) identifies issues such as the age and expertise of educators, gender dynamics, peer pressure, and parents' limited understanding of these subjects as key reasons for their phasing out in Tanzania.

The consequences of these actions are evident in students' poor performance in commercial subjects, leading many to shy away from these streams as they witness their peers struggling. A more effective approach in Business Studies emphasizes decision-making and real-life problem-solving rather than merely focusing on academic content. The discipline primarily revolves around case studies, textbooks, and imitation (Makhdoom 2014:62). Dzichauya (2018:15) notes that school authorities and the government fail to motivate teachers to engage with commercial subjects like business studies. This lack of support results in low morale among educators, who feel inadequately equipped to perform their roles. Additionally, insufficient backing from school managers contributes to poor teacher performance. Principals lacking in management skills often neglect to assist teachers facing challenges or provide constructive feedback on their performance and areas for improvement. The absence of proper evaluations leads to a gradual decline in teachers' effectiveness, as they do not have opportunities to enhance their skills (Yariv 2011: 81). Some challenges faced by Business Studies teachers in Zimbabwe, as highlighted by Dzichauya (2018:44), include low pay and incentives, lack of participation in refresher courses, inadequate research and classroom facilities, insufficient furniture, and poor classroom management. These issues ultimately contribute to students' poor performance, which could jeopardize the viability of these streams.

According to the World Economic Forum (2014:224) and the Global Information Technology Report, South Africa is ranked as having the lowest overall quality of education compared to other countries. Maude (2018) points out that some students drop Accounting because they struggle with Mathematics, and those who choose Accounting are required to take Mathematics. Nkadimene (2020:8) states that a major issue in the education system is the lack of government support for the commercial stream. Schools are often under-resourced and lack highly trained teachers with sufficient pedagogical knowledge in commercial subjects. Additionally, the absence of adequate teacher and learner support materials contributes to the decline of commercial subjects in schools.

In a televised address on January 7, 2020, the then Gauteng MEC of education, Panyaza Lesufi, expressed concern about students in his province who showed little interest in pursuing commercial subjects. He highlighted that the number of students enrolled in these subjects had decreased by over 50%. According to DBE performance statistics, the number fell from 35,139 to 14,768 in 2019, which is a decline of approximately 57.97%. The data also reveal that Economics faced a similar trend, though with a smaller drop than Accounting, decreasing from 31,856 in 2008 to 23,856 in 2009, a reduction of about 25.11%.

Some public secondary schools in Limpopo report having very few students in their classrooms, leading to a lack of motivation among learners to choose this stream. Parents significantly influence their children's career choices (Nkadimeng 2020:2). Govender (2012:51) identifies four elements of parental involvement: pressure, psychological support, assistance, and monitoring. Many students feel that their parents strongly believe their future success hinges on Mathematics. However, this belief may discourage students from enrolling in commercial subjects, as most schools require them to take Mathematics alongside these subjects.

Korkmaz (2015:971) pointed out that the type of school students attend can significantly impact their career choices. Different schools offer varying curricula, and some academic streams are regarded more highly than others. Children from families where parents are successful in a specific profession are more likely to pursue similar paths, as they witness their parents' happiness. Conversely, children without role models or support at home often struggle to make career decisions. Priyanka (2020:3868) notes that these students tend to gravitate towards popular streams available at their school.

Nkadimeng (2020:7) contends that inadequate infrastructure and teaching resources, a legacy of apartheid, have led to public schools facing shortages of teachers or lacking sufficiently trained educators at the primary level. This deficiency hampers the foundation in EMS necessary for preparing students for commercial subjects in secondary education. Consequently, teachers may feel demotivated, resulting in stressful working conditions and subpar performance.

Additionally, English plays a role in the challenges faced in commercial subjects. Tshiovhe (2018:47) identified several factors contributing to poor student performance, such as frequent curriculum changes, insufficient support from subject advisors, teachers' attitudes towards accounting, limited teaching strategies, a lack of teaching resources, a shortage of accounting teachers, and the use of English as the medium of instruction.

Mhonyiwa (2014:4) notes that the Minister of Basic Education and Culture in Tanzania introduced a revised secondary school curriculum, which highlighted those commercial subjects faced numerous challenges, including a shortage of resources like teaching and learning materials, and thus should be removed from the national curriculum.

However, this decision was later reconsidered, and commercial subjects were brought back. This change was thought to have negatively impacted learners' progress, as they lost interest in the subjects when they were initially removed. There are several issues within the commercial subjects' stream that are contributing to a decline in student enrollment. If addressed, many of these problems could be resolved or alleviated, considering the involvement of various stakeholders, including teachers, students, school administrators, curriculum advisors, and the Department of Basic Education.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study examined the elimination of commercial subjects in rural schools in Limpopo. The researcher noted a decrease in the number of learners enrolling in these subjects, with some schools having already removed them from their curriculum. Accounting is often the first subject targeted for removal by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which could lead to teachers being assigned to teach subjects they are not qualified for, while newly qualified educators may struggle to find jobs. This phase-out will not only impact teachers but also disadvantage learners who are interested in pursuing careers in this field, forcing them to take subjects they may not enjoy or excel in.

Higher education institutions may see a drop in enrollment in management sciences programs or may end up with students lacking a foundation in commercial subjects.

This situation could ultimately harm the country's economy, as there will be fewer economists, business analysts, and accountants' professions that are already in short supply, according to the South African Institute of Professional Accountants (SAIPA), among other specialists in this area.

In light of rising unemployment in South Africa, particularly among the youth, the researcher has observed an increasing number of individuals starting their own businesses and seeking alternative income sources beyond traditional employment. Maintaining commercial subjects in the curriculum could provide a valuable platform for nurturing well-rounded entrepreneurs, financial managers, and economists. As noted by Schnicker (1943:13), the commercial department is an excellent environment for developing essential traits in students, such as courtesy, reliability, trustworthiness, tact, judgment, business-like conduct, loyalty, neatness, good memory, alertness, punctuality, sincerity, cheerfulness, and self-control. These traits are often referred to as corporate social skills (Barber 2013:386). The decision to phase out commercial subjects has sparked interest in exploring the reasons behind this trend in schools and its potential consequences.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore the reasons for the discontinuation of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools in Limpopo, South Africa. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were established:

- To identify the factors that contribute to the discontinuation of commercial subjects in these schools.
- To understand why commercial subjects are specifically targeted when certain streams are phased out.
- To assess the attitudes of school managers, teachers, and learners towards commercial subjects.
- To propose strategies that could help maintain the teaching of commercial subjects.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions read as follows:

- What factors lead to the discontinuation of commercial subjects in rural Limpopo secondary schools?
- Why are commercial subjects being eliminated in these rural secondary schools?
- What are the attitudes of school managers, teachers, and learners regarding commercial subjects?
- What strategies can be implemented to prevent the discontinuation of commercial subjects?

1.5 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out in rural secondary schools that offer commercial subjects or have phased out these subjects in the Vhembe West District of Limpopo Province.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The results of this study are valuable to various stakeholders, including the basic and higher education departments. Government officials and education policymakers will also gain insights from the results. Learners will have the freedom to select the subjects they wish to study rather than being limited to what is available. Additionally, commercial subject teachers will experience less frequent school changes, as there is often an oversupply of them due to low enrollment. Higher education institutions will benefit from receiving well-prepared students who have a foundational understanding of commercial subjects from their high school education. The Department of Education will be made aware of the factors contributing to the discontinuation of commercial subjects and the resulting implications.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

This section defines the key terms used in this study.

1.7.1 Commercial subjects

The terms commercial subjects and business education can be used interchangeably. According to America (2021:1), in the context of South African education, business education encompasses subjects such as Economic and Management Sciences (Grades 7-9) and Business Studies, Economics, and Accounting in the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase (Grades 10-12). At the school level, commercial subjects primarily focus on equipping students with knowledge and skills that enhance their employability, entrepreneurial abilities, and responsible citizenship. In Nigeria, business education comprises five main components: Bookkeeping, Commerce, Office Practice, Shorthand, and Typewriting (Okoro 2013:131). In this study, the term commercial subject is frequently employed.

1.7.2 Further Education and Training (FET) phase

The Green Paper (1998:6) states that the FET Phase includes all learning and training programs from NQF Levels 2 to 4, which correspond to Grades 10-12. Learners transition to FET after finishing the GET Phase, which is compulsory. Participation in FET is not mandatory, and there is no age restriction. The aim is to encourage lifelong learning. Various providers offer FET, including secondary/high schools, colleges, and on-the-job training programs (Akoojee 2007:210).

1.7.3 Performance

Performance can be understood as the achievement and effectiveness of an individual, team, organization, or process (Ghalem 2016:2). Pinteá (2010:84) suggests that performance may be viewed as an ongoing process rather than merely the outcomes of a specific action or activity. In this study, performance pertains to evaluating learners in designated subjects through the use of assessment tools.

1.7.4 Phasing Out

In the realm of technology, phasing out refers to the gradual decline in the production or use of a specific technology, which can range from large-scale operations to complete abandonment (Koretsky 2021:1). Wegner (2015:74) notes that this process can occur in stages or be implemented all at once, depending on the necessity of the product involved. In this study, phasing out signifies the gradual removal of commercial subjects within the FET phase.

1.7.5 Rural areas

Inan (2021:335) describes rural areas as regions with low population density, where residents primarily rely on agriculture for their income and livelihood. These areas maintain traditional values and national conditions that significantly influence their lives and social opportunities, including education, health, and communication, although these opportunities may not be of high quality. Rural regions often experience low-income levels and a significant reliance on social grants (McGregor 2019:184). In this study, rural areas refer to locations where the majority of the population earns below-average incomes.

1.7.6 Stream

According to Campbell (2017:504), streaming refers to the practice in schools of organizing learners with similar abilities or skills, while Mansour et al. (2016:2548) describe streaming as the process of placing students into classes based on their intellectual or academic performance. In this study, the term "stream" denotes a collection of related subjects that are grouped together.

1.8 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

Chapter 1 presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, research aim and objectives, research questions, and significance of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature and theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research design and methodology that was adopted in this study.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis and interpretation of the collected interview data.

Chapter 5 presents the major results, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a literature review on the decline of commercial subjects, their significance, and the factors contributing to their reduction. Understanding finances and business is crucial for everyday life. There exists a knowledge gap, even among those who are employed, in areas like savings, installment buying, banking, money management, budgeting, insurance, investments, and taxes. Lusardi (2019:1) indicates that individuals are now more accountable for their financial decisions than ever before. Financial markets are evolving rapidly due to technological advancements. People face an overwhelming array of financial products, often with little understanding of them. The landscape has changed significantly from the past, and individuals must make informed choices regarding financial products. With so many options available, understanding the consequences of selecting a particular product is essential, as it can later impact an individual's financial situation or overall well-being. Given these changes, the current decline in student enrollment in commercial subjects is concerning. It can be argued that a specific range of commercial subjects should be incorporated into core curricula, as they are integral to our daily lives. This literature review examines the reasons behind the drop in student enrollment and the phasing out of commercial subjects, discussing factors such as the influence of educators, gender and peer pressure, parental guidance, future career prospects, and other contributing elements

2.2 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS PHASING OUT OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

This section discusses the contributing factors to the phasing out of commercial subjects.

2.2.1 Educators and the School community

Teachers play a crucial role in the teaching and learning process, significantly impacting their students' development. According to a study by Cotnoir (2014:2), the influence teachers have on learners can be grouped into five categories: building relationships, demonstrating passion for their work, guiding students through examples, maintaining high expectations, and showing evident effort and dedication in their teaching. Learners often mirror their teachers' work ethics and the respect they have for the subject matter. If a teacher lacks effort, students are likely to follow suit. Schut (2019:441) points out that teachers who prioritize student development over authority foster a positive learning environment where students feel valued. The essential role of teachers and their influence on learners should not be underestimated. This study aims to further understand the role or the influence of educators on learners when selecting subjects in FET.

One significant issue threatening the viability of commercial subjects is poor teacher performance. Thaba-Nkadimeng (2020:7) found that inadequate teacher performance resulted in fewer students opting for commercial subjects. This poor performance often arises from a lack of knowledge in the educational content and the assignment of teachers to subjects in which they are not specialized. Students are less inclined to choose a path where many struggles. Additionally, insufficient school resources have been shown to negatively affect teacher performance and student outcomes, leading to psychological stress and diminished motivation among teachers due to unfavorable working conditions.

Learners select elective subjects from the senior phase to the FET phase, with the school also influencing their choices. According to Anders (2017:2), the options available to learners are shaped by the school they attend. The choices of pupils are often limited

and largely depend on their geographical location. For instance, many schools in rural Limpopo do not offer commercial subjects, which means learners are unable to select those options. Some schools lack these subjects because they do not fulfill the necessary requirements for a specific combination of subjects, as dictated by government policies regarding pupil enrollment. Though the education system is to be uniform in South Africa, it's still unclear as to why some schools do not offer certain streams.

2.2.2 Gender and peer pressure

In a study by Dom (2018:44), it was observed that there is a connection between gender and subject choices. In many cases, particularly in male-dominated societies, women often struggle to make independent decisions. Female students typically have limited freedom when it comes to selecting their subjects from school through university. These choices are often made by parents or older siblings, who are perceived as more knowledgeable due to their experience. This dynamic is largely shaped by a societal belief that children and young people should heed the advice of their parents and elders regarding their education and other life choices, with male family members frequently taking the lead in these decisions.

Adolescents tend to select subjects based on what is popular or what their peers are choosing. Poskitt (2016:8) found that many adolescents choose subjects based on their initial interest, ability, the suitability of the teacher, and the presence of friends in those classes. Mtemeri (2020:128) concluded that students often rely on peer advice when making decisions. The influence and encouragement from friends play a significant role in shaping students' career choices.

2.2.3 Parental Influence

Parents have a greater impact on their children's career choices than anyone else. A study by Poskitt (2016:17) found that when learners were asked whom they would seek advice from, 72% identified their parents as the most important source. Ogunleye (2018:148) noted that many students tend to follow in their parents' footsteps, especially if their parents' jobs provide satisfaction and a comfortable lifestyle. Children often recognize the advantages of such careers early on and may prefer them over options they are less familiar with.

Several parental factors influence subject choices in secondary schools, including parental expectations, their level of education, socioeconomic status, occupation, and the quality of their relationship with their children. Parents who have pursued careers in

fields like medicine or law often encourage their children to follow similar paths or choose high-paying professions (Sota 2020:5).

2.2.4 Socio-economic status

Young people face important life choices when transitioning from the GET phase to the FET phase. At this point, they must select a stream as they begin taking elective subjects, or they may choose to leave secondary school to explore other interests.

Learners from low socio-economic backgrounds often focus on survival rather than personal interests, while those from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to have access to better income opportunities and avenues for self-fulfillment (Joshi, 2016:37). In many developing countries, career planning is rarely taught, leaving students with limited knowledge about their interests, aptitudes, educational paths, job options, and future planning (Loyalka 2012:4).

Anders et al. (2017:2) discovered significant disparities in the subjects young people study between the ages of 14 and 16. Those from more advantaged households tend to enroll in more selective subjects compared to their peers from disadvantaged backgrounds, with these differences closely tied to the schools they attend. As a result, some learners in rural areas may not even have the option to take commercial subjects at the FET level due to their unavailability. From a psychological standpoint, adolescents often struggle with indecision, which can lead parents to feel compelled to help their children choose careers that may not align with their true personalities. In contrast, learners from medium to high socio-economic backgrounds typically benefit from positive influences that foster self-awareness, enthusiasm, and self-confidence, making them better equipped for decision-making (Olmos-Gomez 2021:2).

2.3 CONSEQUENCES OF TARGETING ACCOUNTING WHEN PHASING OUT OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS IN RURAL LIMPOPO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The following affects the phasing out of Accounting and other commercial subjects:

2.3.1 Business schools and Higher Education

Thaba-Nkadimeng and Mmakola (2020:4) point out that eliminating commercial subjects could ultimately lead to the downfall of business schools and higher education institutions. The South African Institute of Professional Accountants (SAIPA) has already urged students to consider a career in accountancy, which would not only benefit the learners but also help grow the economy, as they predict a shortfall of around 20,000 professionals. Dos Reis et al. (2019:167) highlighted a disconnect between university education and secondary schooling. Their research indicates that students entering business schools often lack essential subject knowledge, struggle with problem-solving, and find it difficult to engage in critical thinking. Similarly, Steenkamp et al. (2015:116) examined factors affecting success in first-year accounting and identified that students face challenges in the subject at the university level due to not having studied it in secondary school. This information underscores the impact of phasing out commercial subjects on secondary education, higher learning institutions, and the overall economy of the country.

2.3.2 The economy of the country

The skills of an economist encompass a deep understanding of opportunities and costs involved in decision-making, as well as the ability to evaluate existing policies and their effectiveness. Livermore (2020:27) noted that studying economics not only opens doors to a career in the field but also positions economists as vital contributors to the development of economic policies. The ongoing supply of future economists brings significant social benefits. A survey by the Reserve Bank of Australia highlighted a concerning decline in economics enrolment, indicating that fewer students studying economics could negatively impact the economic literacy of society.

Accounting is crucial for the growth and stability of the economy. High-quality corporate

reporting is essential for enhancing transparency, attracting both domestic and international investment, creating a robust investment climate, and building investor

confidence, all of which contribute to financial stability (ACCA 2015:3). Given the increasing corruption in our country, this subject should not be overlooked.

2.3.3 Teacher redeployment

Redeployment refers to the process of moving teachers from schools that have too many staff to those that are short-staffed. This decision is based on the operational needs of the school, which are influenced by factors such as student enrollment, changes in the curriculum, and adjustments in the grading system of a specific school (Zengele 2013:4). While the goal of redeployment is to improve the teacher-learner ratio, it often creates more challenges than it solves. A study by Onwu (2015:125) on the professional development of teachers in South Africa highlighted that curriculum changes can lead to teachers being assigned to teach subjects outside their area of expertise or phase, which can be harmful. For instance, if commercial subjects are eliminated, teachers specializing in those areas may need to be redeployed to different schools to teach entirely new subjects, leading to further complications at those institutions.

In interviews conducted by Maringe (2015:376) regarding staff redeployment and rationalization, principals noted that the redeployment of educators frequently does not align with the curriculum needs of the receiving school. They pointed out that “one school might have an excess of teachers, but the recipient school of the excess might require a teacher with different subjects than the one they are receiving,” which can overwhelm the existing staff. This situation arises because a new teacher is brought in solely to address the teacher-learner ratio. Redeployment not only affects the curriculum needs of the school but also has a significant impact on the teachers involved, as they may be forced to relocate away from their families. This can leave them feeling unappreciated, overlooked, and undervalued, all while living with the anxiety of potential future redeployments (Maile 2005:184).

2.4 ATTITUDE OF SCHOOL MANAGERS, TEACHERS, AND LEARNERS TOWARDS THE PHASING OUT OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

2.4.1 Schools managers

Maduabum (2021:2) defined attitude as a psychological factor that influences how individuals perceive and make choices. Attitudes can be expressed through both words and actions. Principals, as school managers, are tasked with overseeing the overall operation of the school, fostering educational development, and maintaining high standards within the institution (Nyaegah 2022:15). Olayinka (2019:19) pointed out that there is a shortage of commercial secondary schools in Nigeria. Education stakeholders seem unconcerned about the ongoing crisis. This indicates a lack of interest from these stakeholders in the future of the commercial subjects' stream, suggesting they will likely do little to support its growth.

While there is limited research on school managers' attitudes towards commercial subjects in South Africa, existing literature suggests a connection between principals' attitudes and the implementation of these subjects. If a principal, acting as a gatekeeper and supervisor, lacks enthusiasm for a particular theme or innovation, it may hinder successful implementation (Teerling et al., 2020:9). Schools have the autonomy to design their own curricula, and many choose to pair commercial subjects with Mathematics, despite concerns regarding poor performance in Mathematics (Hlalele 2018:209). This study aims to explore the attitudes of school managers towards commercial subjects.

2.4.2 Teachers

The attitude of a teacher has a significant impact on a learner's performance. It greatly affects students' interest in learning (Omolara 2015:3). A person's attitude towards their profession reflects their understanding of its value and importance in society. When teachers are committed to their role and maintain a positive outlook on teaching, it can lead to effective

instruction and improved student achievement (Owusu-Fordjour 2021:163). This indicates that a teacher's attitude towards the subject they teach is crucial in shaping how learners perceive the subject and their performance in it. A common theory regarding the connection between a teacher's attitude and student performance suggests that students who are taught with a positive approach tend to perform better, as they exhibit the right mindset (Abudu-kamal 2014:36).

2.4.3 Learners

A study by Chawla et al. (2013:178) examined learners' attitudes towards accounting and found that while students had positive feelings about their teachers and their teaching methods, their overall attitude towards the subject itself was negative. Male students generally enjoyed the subject and felt a sense of ownership over it, whereas female students often found it confusing and believed it wasn't meant for them.

Learners' motivation plays a crucial role in their success in high school, which is closely tied to their attitudes towards different subjects. When students have a positive outlook on a subject, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material, and teachers can enhance this by making the curriculum appealing (Berkova 2020:2).

Several factors influence learners' attitudes when choosing commercial subjects, including the implementation of inclusion in schools, the level of support available, resource distribution, parental involvement, and the overall educational framework (Olayinka 2019:20). Neilson (2022:19) noted that students who opt out of accounting often believe that society places a higher value on science and engineering fields. In contrast, those studying Accounting perceive it as being heavily focused on numbers, often describing it as boring and tedious, requiring strong mathematical and analytical skills rather than social and verbal abilities.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework in educational research serves to support the theory behind a research study. In this context, the framework introduces and explains the theory that accounts for the existence of the research problem being examined. This study utilizes Anderson's theory of developmental learning, published in 2006, to investigate the reasons and implications of phasing out commercial subjects in rural Limpopo secondary schools. This theory was chosen because it effectively captures the experiences of both teachers and learners regarding the removal of commercial subjects in these schools. According to Anderson and Anderson (2012:2), this theory considers changes in content, people, and processes.

Content focuses on the technical and organizational factors that necessitate change. In this study, the organization within schools needs to adapt, including adjustments to the curriculum structure, educational systems, and the technology employed. There is a pressing need to reform the foundation of the Economic and Management Sciences curriculum, as highlighted by NPR EMS, which underpins commercial subjects but does not receive the same level of urgency as subjects like Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

People examine subjective factors such as individual mindsets, behavioral patterns, and collective culture. Important aspects may include emotional responses to commercial subjects, motivation for change, the balance between commitment and resistance, political influences, and the readiness of individuals to embrace change.

Process involves analysing potential action plans or strategies that can be developed and executed to facilitate the change process throughout the organization. This outlines how changes in content and people will be planned and implemented. The change process encompasses all actions and decisions related to change, from recognizing the need for it to achieving the desired outcome. It includes governance of the change, planning, communication, engagement, and the adjustments made to the change plan and its results.

The education system in secondary education plays a crucial role in shaping the attitudes, skills, competencies, values, and knowledge of students (Department of Basic Education 2018). The School Management Team (SMT) is a vital component of the school as an organization, responsible for implementing changes such as the removal of commercial subjects from the curriculum. Anderson's theory of developmental learning highlights the significance of general knowledge and concepts that aid in planning. This research investigates whether students grasped the commercial subjects and the reasons behind their discontinuation. The theory underscores the essential role of teachers in guiding students to develop new plans and make connections between concepts. It also explores the value of prior knowledge in commercial subjects and how it integrates into the overall curriculum. Additionally, it stresses the importance of self-study among students to acquire prior knowledge and foster a positive attitude toward the subject.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the study details the research design and the methods employed by the researcher to gather data. Essentially, it describes the approaches taken in the study. It covers the research paradigm, research design, study area, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis strategies, along with ethical considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Khatri (2020:1435) describes a paradigm as the theoretical or philosophical foundation for research. It is essentially viewed as a research philosophy. A paradigm encompasses the core beliefs and principles that influence how a researcher perceives the world and interacts within it. This research paradigm guides the entire research process, including the identification of the research problem, the structure of that problem, and the overall value of the research work. It is divided into four key elements: epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology (Kivunja 2017:26).

In educational research, various approaches can be adopted. Researchers may choose a positivist approach, a constructivist approach, or critical theory (Rehman 2016:52).

Constructivist research approaches enable individuals to build their own knowledge and understanding of the world based on their experiences and encounters (Adom 2016:2). This study employed a constructivist approach because individuals have unique realities and varying reasons for not selecting commercial subjects or for losing interest in that field. These differing realities are influenced by factors such as their origins, family backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses. Therefore, the researcher needed to engage with various individuals affected by the discontinuation of commercial subjects to gain a comprehensive perspective.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design consists of a framework and steps aimed at tackling the research problem. It serves as a summary of the model utilized in this study. The exploratory research design was employed to help the researcher gain insights into the phenomenon, which had not been extensively studied.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study utilized a qualitative approach. The primary objective of qualitative research is to provide a detailed understanding of real-life situations. The study sought to capture the perspectives of the participants accurately and gathered data through various methods (Sambo 2017:34). This approach was selected to confront empirical reality from the viewpoints of those being studied, aiming to understand their experiences as closely as possible to how they perceive or live them.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used as the method for data collection to gather relevant information for addressing the research questions. This method was chosen because it allows school principals, teachers, and students the freedom to respond to questions in their own way. It also generates a rich and comparable set of data. Interviews were conducted with school principals, teachers, and students involved in commercial subjects.

3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.6.1 Population

According to Majid (2018:3), the population refers to the specific group that the study aims to investigate. In research, it is often impractical to include the entire population. For this study, the population consisted of all principals, teachers of commercial subjects with at least three years of teaching experience, and students in rural schools

that have discontinued commercial subjects in the Vhembe West District. Participants were selected from 10 different schools within the Vhembe District.

3.6.2 Sampling procedure

Sampling is the technique used to choose a suitable sample or a representative segment of the population of interest. This process involves selecting specific units from the population for study purposes. An effective sample accurately represents the population, providing sufficient data to address the research question. In this study, non- probability purposive sampling was employed to select teachers and schools (Majid 2018:3). This technique allowed the researcher to identify teachers and students impacted by the discontinuation of commercial subjects in Vhembe schools.

Purposive sampling targets individuals who are most likely to provide relevant and useful information. It also aims to select cases that will make efficient use of research resources. Campbell et al. (2020:654) note that purposive sampling diverges from random sampling, as certain individuals may possess unique and significant perspectives on the topics being studied. Etikan et al. (2015:2) emphasized that in purposive sampling, participants are chosen based on the study's objectives, with the expectation that each will contribute diverse and valuable insights to the research.

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select specific individuals (teachers, learners, school managers) who were directly involved in the phasing out of commercial subjects. The focus of this study was narrowed down to schools in the Vhembe West District, as the residents of this area share similar socio-economic backgrounds. By sampling learners, teachers, and school managers, the researcher was able to gather diverse perspectives and insights on the issue. This method of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to save time and resources, as it provided a flexible approach that could adapt to changing circumstances.

3.6.3 Sample size

According to Majid (2018:5), the sample size refers to the number of units of analysis selected from the population of interest. In qualitative research, the sample size is determined when data saturation is achieved. The study aimed to include 9 principals, as they were responsible for introducing and phasing out a subject, along with 9 commercial subject teachers who taught those subjects, and focus groups of learners (3 in each group, totaling 18).

3.7 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument used to gather information in this study was the interview schedule. The questions in the interview guide were based on the research objectives of the study. This guide was developed in alignment with the research questions and was written in English. It consisted of two sections: the first section gathered demographic information, while the second included four open-ended questions.

3.8 PILOT STUDY

Roberts (2020:3197) describes a pilot study as a smaller version of the actual study, serving as a tool for managing background information. It assesses the effectiveness of data collection methods and the data analysis process before the main study is conducted. A pilot study helped the researcher establish clear objectives and improve the validity of the qualitative research. Additionally, it allowed the researcher to become familiar with the topic and the participants. By conducting a pilot study, the researcher was able to identify unforeseen issues that could impact the collection or analysis of results prior to entering the field. For this pilot study, 3 commercial subject teachers, 3 learners, and 3 SMT members were interviewed. The participants in the pilot study did not take part in the actual study. The results from the pilot study were not included in the study's results but were used to refine the research and adjust any questions that were deemed inappropriate or irrelevant.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness of the study refers to how much attention it deserves and how much the reader can trust its results (Gunawan 2015:10). A study is considered trustworthy only if the reader perceives the research report as reliable. This study established trustworthiness through dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

3.9.1 Dependability

Maree (2012:9) defines dependability as the stability and consistency of the research process and methods over time, which affects the level of control in the study. In this research, dependability was achieved through a code and recode approach. The same data was coded at different intervals, allowing the researcher to observe the results multiple times and make necessary adjustments.

3.9.2 Credibility

In this context, credibility refers to how accurately the researcher interpreted the data provided by the participants (Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2014). The study enhanced credibility through prolonged engagement, where the researcher spent significant time with participants to gain a deeper understanding. This immersion allowed the researcher to connect more closely with the participants' experiences.

3.9.3 Transferability

Transferability is defined as the degree to which the results can be applied to other similar situations or contexts (Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2014). The researcher facilitated transferability by offering a comprehensive description of the inquiry, which provided a rich context for evaluating how well the research results might apply in other settings.

3.9.4 Confirmability

The extent to which other researchers can verify or support the results of a study is known as confirmability (Maree 2012:7). When research is confirmable, it leads to conclusions that are based on data rather than personal opinions. In this study, confirmability was achieved by having an external researcher, who was not involved in the study, evaluate whether the methods and overall procedures were described clearly and, in enough detail, to allow for data verification.

3.10 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection refers to the organized and meticulous process of gathering information that is pertinent to addressing the research question. The data obtained from the sample can be classified as either direct or indirect data (Lopez & Whitehead 2013:136). In this research, semi-structured interviews were employed as the method for data collection. This approach enables the researcher to ask questions that elicit information regarding the interviewees' views, perceptions, opinions, and beliefs about a particular phenomenon (Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2014). It also allows for deeper probing to obtain more detailed insights. The study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with commercial subject teachers from schools located in the Vhembe West district.

3.11 DATA ANALYSIS

As noted by Kumar (2014), qualitative data analysis involves the systematic interpretation of data collected through interviews to establish order, derive meaning, and convey the results of the study. The researcher utilized a thematic analysis approach to examine the qualitative data. The analysis was carried out following Tesch's eight steps in the coding process.

Tesch's eight steps in the coding process by Cresswell (2017).

Step 1: This step involves getting the researcher acquainted with the information and grasping the essence of the transcription. As they read, the researcher noted down ideas that came to mind.

Step 2: The researcher selected one interview transcript and examined it to gain a deeper understanding of its content, particularly its underlying meaning.

Step 3: In this step, the researcher compiled topics from different transcripts and organized similar ones together. The segments of text were then coded.

Step 4: This step focuses on generating themes: the researcher identifies intriguing segments and develops them into themes. They revisited the codes, grouped them, and checked for any new themes that might have surfaced.

Step 5: This step is dedicated to defining and naming themes. The researcher refined and clarified themes and subthemes within the data, selecting the most descriptive language for the topics and organizing related ones to illustrate their interconnections.

Step 6: In this step, the researcher established abbreviations for each category in one location before conducting a preliminary analysis.

Step 7: This step involves establishing relationships based on the themes and codes that have been generated.

Step 8: In the final step, the researcher documented existing data as needed.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014), ethics play a crucial role in maintaining scientific integrity on a personal level, but their impact extends beyond the individual. Research ethics are designed to protect participants from harm. The researcher took steps to ensure that the study adhered to ethical standards and that all ethical considerations were addressed. This research focused on several ethical aspects: obtaining permission for data collection, ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and guaranteeing anonymity. The research proposal was submitted to

the School of Education Higher Degree Committee at the University of Venda. Permission to conduct the study was requested from the Department of Basic Education in Limpopo Province.

3.12.1 informed consent

Informed consent is a key element in research ethics. Nijhawani et al. (2013) explain that informed consent is defined in ethical codes and regulations that govern research involving human subjects. The aim is to provide potential participants with sufficient information, presented in clear language, so they can make an informed decision about their participation in the study. Nijhawani et al. (2013) also highlight that informed consent is often documented through signed and dated forms that outline the study's purpose, benefits, risks, and other essential information needed for participants to make a voluntary decision. The study by Marshall et al. (2006) suggested that informed consent relies on participants having a clear understanding of the study's nature and objectives.

In this study, participants were provided with informed consent forms and information letters that they were required to read before agreeing to participate. The researcher made sure that participants fully understood what was expected of them during the study and how the results would be utilized.

3.12.2 Voluntary participation

Bhandari (2023) explains that voluntary participation means that all research subjects have the freedom to decide whether or not to take part. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time without feeling pressured to continue. They are not obligated to provide a reason for their departure, and it is essential to reassure them that there will be no negative consequences for choosing not to participate. Participants were made aware of their right to decline involvement in the study or to withdraw at any point without facing any penalties.

3.12.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is often associated with the principle of privacy, which is a core belief in our society that individuals have the right to keep their personal matters private. It means that discussions will not be shared or disclosed without consent (Wiles et al., 2006). Bourke and Wessely (2008) define confidentiality as the obligation to protect information shared by or about an individual during a professional relationship, ensuring it remains secure and private, even after the individual has passed away. This principle reflects a complex blend of societal values regarding information privacy, the secrecy of personal data, and individual autonomy. Confidentiality pertains to the status of information about a person, with the holder of that information bound by a promise either implicit or explicit to safeguard it from unauthorized access and misuse (Duncan et al., 2011). The researcher maintained confidentiality by ensuring that the information provided by participants would be accessible only to them. Details about privacy were included in the consent form, and participants were informed that their data would be collected solely for research purposes and kept confidential.

3.12.4 Anonymity

Anonymity is one way to ensure confidentiality. In practice, this means that any identifying information about research participants such as names, nationality, ethnic background, age, job, and residence must be removed from the final research reports. Traditionally, anonymity is used to protect contributors from potential harm (Dube et al., 2014). According to Sauders et al. (2015), anonymity encompasses all information that is kept confidential from everyone except the primary research team, making it a form of confidentiality. To guarantee anonymity in a study, it is essential not to collect any personally identifiable information (Bhandari 2023).

Throughout the research process, the researcher did not record participants' names, ensuring that the information shared could not be traced back to their identities. Instead, participants were identified using numbers, while principals and teachers were designated with letters

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents qualitative research results, which explored the reasons behind the discontinuation of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools in Vhembe West, Limpopo, South Africa. The analysis is based on the responses of survey participants who volunteered to participate in the study. The study adhered to ethical guidelines by ensuring that all potential interviewees were fully informed about the research objectives and their participation before conducting interviews. Before conducting the interviews, the interviewer clearly explained the study's purpose, provided detailed information about the consent form, and obtained explicit permission from the survey respondents to record the conversation. Survey respondents provided verbal and written consent, confirming their full comprehension of the study and voluntary agreement to participate. The absence of questions or concerns from survey respondents indicates that the information provided was clear and understandable, ensuring that informed consent was obtained under ethical standards.

The analysis and presentation of research results were designed to address the following research objectives:

- To understand factors leading to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural Limpopo secondary schools.
- To determine the reasons for targeting commercial subjects when schools phase out certain streams.
- To determine the attitude of school managers, teachers, and learners towards commercial subjects.
- To suggest the strategies that can be utilised to retain the teaching of commercial subjects

4.2 SURVEY PARTICIPANTS SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

This study adopted a qualitative approach where purposive sampling of educators teaching commercial subjects, school managers and learners were interviewed, and observation techniques were used to collect data. A total of 9 school principals, 9 commercial subject teachers and 18 learners were used in this study. Focus group interviews were conducted with learners aged 15-20 from different schools in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province of South Africa. There were 6 focus groups (3 learners per group) of learners, 3 groups consisting of learners in commercial subjects and 3 groups consisting of learners in other streams. The duration of the interview for educators and Principals was 30 minutes each and the focus groups were 40 minutes. Participants included female and male learners not studying commercial subjects and female and male learners currently enrolled in commercial subjects. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers from various schools in Vhembe West District. All teachers had over 10 years of experience. School principals were also interviewed. Survey responses were coded with suffixes T, P, and FGD to denote teachers (T), principals (P), and focus group discussion participants (FGD), respectively.

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Table 4.1 presents the key themes and sub-themes that emerged from qualitative data analysis of the interview data related to the factors contributing to the phasing out of commercial subjects in schools, including some of the reasons and attitudes of school managers, teachers, and learners towards commercial subjects. These themes capture the diverse perspectives and insights gathered from the survey respondents.

Table 4.1: Themes and sub-themes describing factors, reasons and attitudes towards commercial subjects.

Contributing Factors	Reasons for phasing out commercial subjects	Attitudes
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Theme1: Educational policies and curriculum changes Sub-theme1: Government policies and priorities	Theme 1: Parental Influence Sub-theme 1: Parental Aspirations	Theme 1: School management's attitude towards commercial subjects
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Contributing Factors	Reasons for phasing out commercial subjects	Attitudes
Sub-theme2: Curriculum reforms and changes in subject offerings Sub-theme 3: Resource allocation and funding for commercial subjects	Sub-theme 2: Perception of Prestige	Sub-theme 1: Preference for high-performing subjects Sub-theme 2: Fear of accountability and results-based decisions Sub-theme 3: Lack of support for commercial subjects
Theme 2: School- level factors Sub-theme 1: School leadership and management decisions Sub-theme 2: Teacher availability and expertise in commercial subjects Sub-theme 3: School infrastructure and resources	Theme 2: School management prioritisation Sub-theme 1: Focus on high-performing subjects Sub-theme 2: Fear of accountability	Theme 2: Teachers' attitude towards commercial subjects Sub-theme 1: Lack of resources and practical engagement Sub-theme 2: Low enrollment and motivation Sub-theme 3: Recruitment efforts and resistance from management

Theme 3: Student Factors Sub-theme 1: Student interest and performance in commercial subjects Sub-theme 2: Perceived relevance of commercial subjects to future careers	Theme 3: Lack of university recognition Sub-theme 1: Limited university pathways Sub-theme 2: Perception of academic value :	Theme 3: Learners' attitude towards commercial subjects Sub-theme 1: Fear of failure Sub-theme 2: Perceived lack of relevance
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Contributing Factors	Reasons for phasing out commercial subjects	Attitudes
Sub-theme 3: Alternative subject choices and career paths		Sub-theme 3: Peer and Societal Pressure
Theme 4: Socioeconomic Factors Sub-theme 1: Economic conditions and job market trends Sub-theme 2: Accessibility of vocational training and apprenticeships Sub-theme 3: Socioeconomic disparities and educational inequalities	Theme 4: Learner fear and underperformance Sub-theme 1: Fear of academic failure. Sub-theme 2: Low confidence	Theme 4: External influences on subject choices Sub-theme 1: Parental influence Sub-theme 2: Systemic circulars and policies

Theme 5: Community and societal factors Sub-theme 1: Cultural perceptions and attitudes towards commercial subjects Sub-theme 2: Community expectations and aspirations for students Sub-theme 3: Role of parents, guardians and	Theme 5: Cultural and societal expectations Sub-theme 1: Community and Societal Pressure Sub-theme 2: Perception of Contribution to National Development	Theme 5: Impact of enrollment on commercial subject viability Sub-theme 1: Declining learner numbers in commercial subjects Sub-theme 2: School stream decisions based on numbers
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Contributing Factors	Reasons for phasing out commercial subjects	Attitudes
family members in educational decisions		

4.3.1 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PHASING OUT OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

4.3.1.1 Theme 1: Educational policies and curriculum changes

This section presents the results of the content data analysis, addressing the first research objective, which sought to understand the factors that contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects. Consequently, this section presents themes and sub-themes that best describe the factors that lead to the elimination of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools.

4.3.1.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Government policies and priorities

Data analysis revealed that the government's actions were to blame for causing the

phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools. Participant (P4), a principal at one rural school, blamed the government for not doing much to improve the quality of education, which contributed to poor performance, which in turn motivated the decision by schools to phase out commercial subjects from schools. For instance, funding policies seeking to promote the uptake of STEM subjects have led to low uptake of commercial subjects, leading to the phase-out of commercial streams in rural secondary schools. One principal indicated that:

“The root cause is that the government is not doing enough to improve the quality of education.” (P9) (see appendices M line 65)

Another participant, a teacher, blamed the phasing out of commercial subjects by rural secondary schools by noting the challenges that students experienced following the

government policy, which made it compulsory for Mathematics to be part of any commercial combination. One teacher bemoaned:

“The reason is that students were finding it difficult for the learners to do mathematics and accounting. Students started to drop out of commercial subjects when the government introduced the idea that there is no commercial combination without mathematics. So it was useless to have 5 learners in a class, so the teachers had no work to do; hence, we decided to phase the subject.” (T7) (see appendices M line 147)

Further, the analysis by teachers’ union members revealed that the government policy of low enrolment, which makes it necessary for schools to discontinue a stream if a class has less than 24 learners, contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools. Teacher union members mentioned that schools had policies that allowed for discontinuing subjects with fewer than 20 students enrolled per class.

One of the principals, who is also a union site steward, had this to say:

“They (teacher unions) insisted that this must not be phased out, but because of the small number of learners, they were not having a choice. According to school policy, a class with less than 20 students cannot proceed.” (P7) (see appendices M line 75)

The results placing government policies at the forefront of factors contributing to the phasing out of commercial subjects concur with the finding reached by Dzichauya (2018:15) that school authorities and government, through their policies, management styles and approaches, fall short in motivating teachers who teach commercial subjects such as business studies, accounting among others thereby contributing to a gradual decline in learner enrollment for commercial streams.

4.3.1.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Curriculum reforms and changes in subject offerings

Data analysis also revealed that curriculum reforms and changes in subject offerings contributed to the phasing out commercial subjects. Particularly, the analysis revealed

that gaps in curriculum promotions contributed to declining enrollment and the eventual phasing out of these subjects. For instance, one teacher expressed concern about the lack of proactive involvement from both teachers and the School Management Team (SMT) in promoting the value of commercial subjects. A participant teacher (T2) highlighted that while commercial subject teachers should actively engage with Grade 9 learners to demonstrate the importance of commercial subjects, the SMT, as the curriculum's overseer, is also responsible for encouraging learners. The following response by T2, T3, T5 and T7 emphasises the role of curriculum reforms and changes in subject offerings in contributing to the phasing out of commercial subjects:

"I cannot point fingers exactly, but as a commercial subject teacher, I think I should be the one who is supposed to go and speak to the Grade 9, showing them the importance. However, the SMT, as the custodian of the whole curriculum at school, can also put affirmative action (AA) on hand so that learners are encouraged to do the commercial subjects because it's not a good thing to be pleased by the results for easy subjects. Whereas learners are just passing without gaining the skills they need to succeed after leaving school. (T5) (see appendices M line 135)

After high school, I think SMT should get involved positively to keep this dream alive. (T7) (see appendices M line 115)

Not really, but the teachers themselves who are offering the EMS can do better. I'm not sure if, besides being chartered accountants, they are informed that they can also pursue a degree in economics. I don't know whether it involves mathematics, but they can make many career choices if they are encouraged by both SMT and the teachers concerned." (T3) (see appendices M line 109)

"Yes, however, the school principal discourages the learners from taking commercial subjects because they think that there are no job opportunities other than being a chartered accountant, but there are so many career choices that they can make if they are encouraged by both SMT and the teachers concerned" (T7) (see appendices M line 190)

Becher and Maclure (2024) support the results that curriculum reforms and shifts in subject offerings often result in the phasing out of commercial subjects. Their analysis highlights the political dynamics involved in curriculum changes, which frequently prioritise certain disciplines over others, impacting the continuity of commercial subjects (Becher & Maclure 2024).

4.3.1.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Resource allocation and funding for commercial subjects

Data analysis revealed challenges with resource allocation and funding as one of the several factors contributing to the phasing out of commercial subjects. For instance, one teacher (T6) highlighted that lack of funding or poor resource allocation caused the phasing out of commercial subjects by stating the following:

“There are many challenges. First, there is a lack of support from fellow teachers, who often promote science-related streams over commercial subjects. Principals also focus on physical sciences and do not provide the necessary support for commercial subjects.” (T6) (see appendices M line 145)

Wong, Chiu, Murray and Horsburgh (2022) support the results that resource allocation and funding priorities lead to the phasing out of commercial subjects. Wong et al. (2022) showed that under-represented STEM students in higher education highlight how financial and resource prioritisation often marginalises certain fields, leading to reduced support and ultimately impacting the availability and sustainability of commercial subjects in educational institutions.

4.3.1.2 Theme 2: School-Level Factors

4.3.1.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: School leadership and management decisions

Data analysis showed that leadership and management decisions at the school level contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools.

Particularly, the analysis revealed that school leadership and management decisions determine the level of prioritisation given to the recruitment, development, and retention of qualified teachers in commercial subjects, which, in turn, helps ensure learners’

access to inspiring and knowledgeable educators. Further, survey participants revealed that management decisions contributed to the possibility of diverting learners' interests towards subjects that enhance the pass rate of schools. One teacher (T1) supported these perceptions by revealing the following:

“The school management team (SMT) also contributes by focusing on subjects that yield high results, such as physical sciences, and sidelining commercial subjects, like accounting, which students often struggle with.” (T1) (see appendices M line 99)

Further analysis also revealed that school principals do not care about the future of the learners and the country. The analysis revealed that this factor contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools. Teacher (T8) revealed the following in support of the finding reported above:

“The principals of most schools don’t care about the future of the learners and country.” (T8) (see appendices M line 148)

The finding that leadership and management decisions contribute to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools is supported by Dzichauya (2018:15), who demonstrates that leadership and management styles lacking in teacher motivation, particularly for those teaching commercial subjects such as business studies and accounting resulting in a gradual decline in student enrollment in commercial streams. The present study found that the phasing out of commercial subjects in schools was not abrupt but occurred gradually, as student enrollment in commercial streams steadily declined over time, ultimately leading to the decision to discontinue offering these subjects.

4.3.1.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Teacher availability and expertise in commercial subjects

Data analysis revealed that a lack of qualified teachers contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools, reportedly due to teachers lacking the

necessary knowledge and skills to teach these subjects effectively. Specifically, the school principal (P4) reported the following in support of the observation:

“First, we need to go back to basics. We need a proper foundation where teachers with knowledge should teach commerce because now they take anyone who is not qualified to teach our commerce. That subject on its own needs someone with the knowledge to teach. Teachers should be trained with knowledge and skills to teach commercial subjects.” (P4) (see appendices M line 51)

Further, the analysis also revealed that teachers, as educators and role models, significantly influenced learners' attitudes towards subjects. Particularly, the analysis showed that teachers' enthusiasm, expertise, and dedication can inspire learners to pursue different fields of study, such as commercial subjects. For instance, if teachers demonstrate a passion for commercial subjects and effectively convey their importance and relevance, it can positively impact student interest and engagement in these areas. One teacher (T5) revealed the following in support of this finding:

“To a certain extent, I think educators have a part in influencing learners. If you are a teacher, then you are a role model to the learners and have excellence. The learners will be encouraged to follow the subject that you teach.” (T5) (see appendices M line 144)

The results highlighting the lack of qualified teachers to teach commercial subjects in rural secondary schools concur with results reported by Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020). Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020) showed that teacher shortage contributes to the phasing out commercial or entrepreneurial subjects in rural schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

4.3.1.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: School infrastructure and resources

Data analysis also revealed that lack of teaching resources contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools. Lack of resources, such as

required teaching aids, were reportedly causing the phase-out. Specifically, T4 reported the following in support of the observation:

“I don’t have enough teaching aids for commercial subjects, rather have knowledge of theory and traditional teaching.” (T4) (see appendices M line 139)

By analysing information provided by T5, it can also be seen that lack of recourse on commercial subjects also contributes to the phasing out of these subjects, thus:

“When we talk of materials, we don’t have enough resources for the commercial subject. A lot of things don’t even focus on the commercial subjects. For some of the books, we don’t even have enough resources, for example, forms and handouts for those commercial subjects, and we tend not to have them because they do not concentrate on the commercial subjects.”(T5) (see appendices M line 140)

The finding that a lack of teaching resources contributes to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools is supported by Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020), who demonstrated that the absence of strategic school resources and infrastructure has led to the discontinuation of commercial subjects.

4.3.1.3 Theme 3: Student Factors

4.3.1.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Student interest and performance in commercial subjects

Qualitative data analysis revealed that learners had a limited understanding of commercial subjects, contributing to their waning interest. One teacher (T1) expressed that despite being exposed to these subjects, many learners lacked the depth of knowledge necessary to engage fully and appreciate their relevance. Specifically, one participant expressed the following to support the observation:

“Yes, Learners are losing interest in commercial subjects. The students are not well informed on commercial subjects. They have a bit of knowledge of what they are taught, which is not enough to encourage anyone to pursue commercial

subjects.” (T1) (see appendices M line 91)

One school principal (P3) also supported the view by teacher T1 that learners lacked interest in commercial subjects by stating the following:

“We do have qualified teachers, but the learners themselves are not interested in the subject. They tend to perform well in management topics, but struggle with accounting.” (P3) (see appendices M line 8)

Further, teacher T1 expressed that learners lacked motivation due to a lack of information about possible career paths that commercial subject majors can pursue in post-secondary school. To support this claim, the teacher (T1) stated the following:

“If learners know the wide range of careers that follow commercial subject maybe they would opt for them” (T1) (see appendices M line 111)

The finding that students' poor performance in commercial subjects contributed to the phasing out of the commercial stream concurs with results reported by Smith (2018). Smith (2018) showed that learners in rural areas lacked interest in commercial subjects due to weak job prospects. A study by Johnson and Lee (2020) also showed that poor academic performance by learners in rural-based schools led to the phasing out of commercial subjects due to affected academic performance and motivation.

4.3.1.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Perceived relevance of commercial subjects to future careers

The analysis revealed that learners have a negative perception of commercial subjects, largely due to concerns about limited job opportunities in the future. This perception stems from a belief that these subjects lack creativity and innovation, leading some learners to abandon hopes of pursuing creative and innovative careers. Consequently, reduced enrollment has contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects. One teacher (T2) explained why learners preferred studying physical and social sciences over commercial subjects with the following statement:

“yebo and.... many believe that only physical sciences or social sciences lead to successful careers, and this belief discourages learners from taking commercial

subjects” (T2) (see appendices M line 92)

The finding that negative perceptions of commercial subjects are linked to concerns about limited future job opportunities aligns closely with Akerman's (2012) research. Akerman found that negative perceptions often arise in subjects with low enrolment, as students become increasingly hesitant to enrol.

4.3.1.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Alternative subject choices and career paths

Data analysis revealed that the existence of alternative subject choices and career paths contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects. The analysis revealed that engineering subjects presented a direct threat to the survival of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools. One teacher (T4) highlighted the non-compulsory nature of commercial subjects as a contributing factor to their decline, stating the following:

“The Department of Education should also make commercial subjects compulsory so that even learners who pursue careers in science, law, or engineering have the business knowledge needed to manage their own careers or businesses.” (T4) (see appendices M line 135)

The finding that existing study stream alternatives contribute to the phasing out of commercial subjects, for example, the STEM stream, concurs with results reported by White and Taylor (2022). Specifically, White and Taylor (2022) found that learners perceive commercial subjects as lacking creativity and innovation, which they believe are essential for securing future employment. As a result, learners become more inclined to pursue alternative academic paths that they perceive as offering better job prospects. Further, White and Taylor (2022) observed that learners often train for vocational education to avoid the state of joblessness in the future among learners.

4.3.1.4 Theme 4: Socioeconomic Factors

4.3.1.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Economic conditions and job market trends

Data analysis revealed that the lack of job opportunities for commercial subject majors contributed to the lack of subjects in rural secondary schools. Particularly, the analysis showed that teachers and principals indicated that learners are no longer interested in

commercial subjects due to a lack of job opportunities. Learners indicated that they are not choosing commercial subjects because their seniors who did commercial subjects don't find jobs, and they end up doing teaching methodology. One participant revealed that jobs in commercial subjects are no longer relevant because of advanced technology. In addition, participants reported that more jobs require science than commercial subjects graduate. The results of the research also outlined that there are limited career opportunities for graduates of commercial subjects, thus:

“Learners are no longer interested in commercial subjects due to a lack of job opportunities after completing their studies.” (T2) (see appendices M line 100)

“This is due to a lack of job opportunities in commercial subjects. For instance, those who pass grade 12 with commercial subjects end up studying Bcom in Accounting, and when they don't find a job, they do PGCE, and due to the decline in the number of learners who are doing commercial, they end up not getting a job even as a qualified teacher. Conversely, there is poor performance in EMS in grade 9.” (T3) (see appendices M line 101)

“One reason is the lack of job opportunities in commercial subjects. Students often go to university to study economics or business, but they may not find jobs afterwards. This is contributing to the decline in learners pursuing commercial subjects. Additionally, many who become economists end up doing PGCE to qualify as teachers, but there are also limited teaching jobs available.” (P8) (see appendices M line 64)

Content data analysis from focus group discussions (FGDs) also supported results from interview data. For instance, the following few responses from FGDs highlight the role of the lack of opportunities in contributing to the recent phase-out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools.

“It did not have enough job security, considering the advancement of technology in life.” (Learner, FGD4) (see appendices M line 251)

*“There are limited career opportunities available in the commercial sector.”
(Learner, FGD4) (see appendices M line 252)*

*“Many jobs require science studies more than commercial ones.” (Learner ,
FGD5) (see appendices M line 254)*

The finding that the lack of job opportunities for commercial subject majors contributed to the phase-out of subjects in rural secondary schools concurs with results by Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020), who identified resource shortages in the form of limited financial resources as key factors contributing to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools. Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020) showed that a lack of adequate financial resources contributes to a decline in learner enrollment for commercial subjects.

4.3.1.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Accessibility of vocational training and apprenticeships

Data analysis revealed that easy access to FET colleges for vocational training and apprenticeships contributed to a lack of motivation among learners to pursue commercial subjects. Participants also expressed that they perceive commercial subjects as subjects associated with a lack of creativity. Particularly, surveyed learners reported that they did not choose commercial subjects because they wanted to be creative, and commercial subjects are full of formulas and theories. Further, some learners revealed that commercial subjects were a waste of time and, hence, were not interesting to them since there were no new experiments. Some learners also indicated that commercial subjects deprived them of the opportunity to be creative. In contrast, others believed that the only thing that can be learnt in the commercial subject stream is to start a business, which fell short of being creative or innovative endeavours to the learners. The following responses reflect learners' perceptions that commercial subjects may be perceived as less creative and innovative, which has contributed to their decline in rural secondary schools:

“Pursuing commercial subjects has never been a consideration for me because they lack creative expression, and science odder that.” (Learner, FGD6) (see appendices M line 255)

“Business studies. This is because I think it’s a waste of time and effort as we learn about opening a business, like experiments.” (Learner, FGD5) (see appendices M line 264)

The finding that easy access to FET colleges for vocational training and apprenticeships has contributed to a lack of motivation among learners to pursue commercial subjects aligns with Khambule's (2019) observation that commercial subjects often lack access to artisanal training opportunities.

4.3.1.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: Socioeconomic disparities and educational inequalities

Data analysis revealed that socio-economic and educational inequalities contributed to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools. Particularly, the study revealed that STEM subjects received more financial support than commercial subjects. For instance, one teacher who participated in this survey admitted that Physical Sciences were more favoured than commercial subjects by highlighting the following:

“Yes, I do my level best. I conduct extra classes even though there’s no financial benefit attached. I also personally fund awards to motivate students who perform well or improve in these subjects. However, it’s challenging when schools prioritize physical sciences with larger class sizes and neglect commercial subjects, which have fewer students.” (T2) (see appendices M line 120)

The finding that socioeconomic disparities and educational inequalities contribute to the phasing out commercial subjects in rural secondary schools aligns with Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola's (2020) research results. Specifically, the study found that disparities in teacher allocation led to shortages of qualified teachers and poor teacher

performance in rural secondary schools, ultimately contributing to declining enrollment and the discontinuation of commercial streams.

4.3.1.5 Theme 5: Community and societal factors

4.3.1.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Cultural perceptions and attitudes towards commercial subjects

Qualitative data analysis revealed that perceptions and attitudinal factors played a role in the phasing out commercial subjects. Surveyed learners expressed that commercial subjects were seen primarily as tools for starting businesses, which they believed often fell short of their expectations. Specifically, learners were more interested in subjects that offered opportunities to enhance their creativity and innovation skills. One teacher acknowledged the influence of cultural perceptions and attitudes by sharing the following view:

“same learners used to say this to me, we did not choose commercial subjects because I love science, and I felt that commercial subjects were more difficult; hence, I thought that if I chose them, I wouldn’t pass.” (T1) (see appendices M line 107)

The finding that learners' perceptions and attitudes contribute to the phasing out of commercial subjects aligns with Akerman's (2012) research results, which highlight the role of negative perceptions in discouraging learners from enrolling in these subjects. Akerman (2012) argues that negative perceptions can arise when students perceive limited opportunities or challenges in pursuing commercial studies. The present study also revealed that learners developed negative attitudes towards commercial subjects due to their perceived lack of creativity and innovation.

4.3.1.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Community expectations and aspirations for students

Data analysis revealed that community expectations and aspirations for students also played a role in the phasing out of commercial subjects. Learners' awareness of the

lack of recognition for commercial subjects by universities contributed to their decline. One teacher participant (T9) highlighted the lack of importance placed on commercial subjects during university enrollment by stating the following:

“The subjects required at university for my career choice do not require commercial subjects. It was pressure from friends, at school, from parents.” (T9) (see appendices M line 149)

The finding that community expectations and aspirations for students contribute to the phasing out of commercial subjects aligns well with the finding reported by Thabankandimene and Mnakola (2020) that the decline in commercial subjects is partly due to fewer students opting for these streams as they pursue what is perceived as more valuable or prestigious fields. The results also revealed that community members, especially parents, encouraged learners to pursue careers in fields that were traditionally viewed as more stable or lucrative, such as engineering or medicine, thereby detracting learners from pursuing commercial subjects. This role of community and society in shaping stream selection by learners was also observed by Dzichauya (2018), who reported that parental and community expectations significantly impacted learners' enrollment decisions.

4.3.1.5.3 Sub-theme 5.3: Role of parents, guardians and family members in educational decisions

The analysis revealed the role of parents in influencing the path of learners. One participant expressed that:

“Throughout my teaching experience, I've observed that one of the main problems is parental influence. Many parents want their children to pursue fields like engineering or the hard sciences, as they believe these are the fields where national recognition and TV awards come from. This has shifted the focus away from commercial subjects.” (T4) (see appendices M line 143)

Further, data analysis revealed that family and friends played a significant role in influencing learners' decisions regarding pursuing commercial subjects. One participant shared that her sister's success influenced her decision to pursue commercial subjects in the field. Her sister's positive experience and financial stability encouraged her to choose a career in commerce. Some learners reported that their decision to pursue commercial subjects was influenced by peer pressure or the desire to fit in with their friends. The following responses from various learners highlight the significant influence that family and friends can have on learners' decisions regarding commercial subjects:

“Yes, I was encouraged by my sister because of the way she performs well in Accounting.” (Learner, FGD2) (see appendices M line 205)

“Yes, I was encouraged by my cousin because in our family, she’s the only one who has studied commercial subjects, and now she is a qualified accountant who earns a lot of money. So, I wanted to be just like her.” (Learner, FGD1) (see appendices M line 206)

“Yes, I was encouraged by my friends who also do commercial subjects.” (Learner, FGD3) (see appendices M line 207)

“My brother, who was also doing well in commercial subjects, encouraged me, so I thought I wouldn’t do either in the science and History stream.” (Learner, FGD3) (see appendices M line 208)

“The subjects required at university for my career choice do not require commercial subjects. It was pressure from friends, at school, from parents.” (T9) (see appendices M line 149)

In contrast, analysis of learners' responses also revealed that some educators influence them not to choose commercial subjects because of a lack of job opportunities. Further, the analysis revealed that some learners were not pressured by external factors such as teachers or friends to choose commercial subjects, thus:

“This is because some educators influence learners not to choose commercial subjects due to a lack of job opportunities.” (Learner, FGD6) (see appendices M line 257)

“I wasn’t encouraged by anyone to choose commercial subjects; I chose commercial subjects because they offer practical skills and knowledge that can be directly applied in the business world.” (Learner, FGD2) (see appendices M line 204)

“I was not encouraged by anyone. I love commercial subjects. I remember when I was still in Grade 7, there was a career day, and I told my teacher and classmates that I wanted to be a businessman.” (Learner, FGD1) (see appendices M line 206)

The results highlight the significant role of parents, guardians, and family members in influencing learners' educational decisions, particularly their choice of study streams. This aligns with Dzichauya's (2018) research results, which observed that parental expectations can significantly impact learners' enrollment decisions, including their choice of commercial subjects.

4.3.2 REASONS FOR PHASING OUT OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

4.3.2.1 Theme 1: Parental Influence

Thematic content data analysis identified themes and sub-themes to capture the multifaceted reasons behind the declining interest in and phasing out of commercial subjects. These themes include parental influence, school management prioritisation, lack of university recognition, learner fear and underperformance, and cultural and societal expectations, among others.

4.3.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1 : Parental aspirations

Data analysis revealed that parental aspirations constituted one of the key reasons for phasing out commercial subjects. Particularly, the analysis revealed that parents

encouraged their children to pursue engineering and hard sciences careers over commercial fields. One participant highlighted how parents' aspirations for their children to gain recognition in prestigious fields influence their preference for hard sciences over commercial subjects by sharing the following view:

"Many parents want their children to pursue fields like engineering or the hard sciences, as they believe these are the fields where national recognition and TV awards come from. This has shifted the focus away from commercial subjects."
(T8) (see appendices M line 156)

The finding that parental aspirations represent a key reason for phasing out commercial subjects aligns well with results reached by Johnson and Lee (2021), emphasising the role parents' economic status plays in significantly influencing their children's educational choices. Johnson and Lee (2021) observed that families with limited financial resources often prioritise vocational training over commercial subjects, perceiving the former as more directly applicable to job readiness. This suggests that parents' aspirations and perceptions of prestige, as influenced by their socioeconomic factors, influence learners' choices and contribute to the decline of commercial subjects.

4.3.2.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2 : Perception of prestige

Data analysis revealed that the perception of commercial subjects as less prestigious, often associated with lower-status careers, formed part of the several reasons that contributed to the decline in the enrollment of commercial subject streams in rural secondary schools. This perception influenced students' career choices and discouraged them from pursuing commercial subjects. One teacher revealed how the pursuit of national recognition and public accolades, particularly in fields like engineering and the hard sciences, led many parents to encourage their children to pursue those subjects over commercial subjects by stating the following:

"Many parents want their children to pursue fields like engineering or the hard sciences, as they believe these are the fields where national recognition and TV

awards come from. This has shifted the focus away from commercial subjects.”(T8) (see appendices M line 156)

The finding that commercial subjects are perceived as less prestigious aligns with observations by Eccles and Wang (2016), who noted that preference for fields deemed more prestigious, such as science and engineering, significantly influences learners’ attitudes and decisions regarding course selection. This finding implies that learners are more inclined to pursue study streams that provide a sense of prestige.

4.3.2.2 Theme 2: School management prioritisation

4.3.2.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1 : Focus on high-performing subjects

Data analysis revealed that school management teams often prioritise subjects with higher pass rates, such as Physical Sciences, over commercial subjects. This focus on high-performing subjects then contributes to the decline in commercial subject enrollment and the allocation of fewer resources to rural secondary schools. One teacher (T1) highlights how the school management prioritises subjects with better performance metrics, sidelining commercial subjects that are seen as more challenging by stating the following:

“The school management team (SMT) also contributes by focusing on subjects that yield high results, such as physical sciences, and sidelining commercial subjects, like accounting, which students often struggle with.” (T1) (see appendices M line 99)

The results that school management teams often prioritise subjects with higher pass rates over subjects with low pass rates, like commercial subjects, concur with results reached by Leepo (2015), who observed that performance targets drive schools. This approach potentially incentivises management teams to prioritise subjects with higher pass rates to meet overall performance benchmarks. Consequently, this focus on high-performing subjects can lead to a lack of necessary support for lower-performing

subjects, which could otherwise help boost learner confidence in areas associated with lower success rates, such as commercial subjects.

4.3.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2 : Fear of accountability

Data analysis revealed that some school leaders avoided accountability for poor performance in commercial subjects by phasing them out and replacing them with alternative subjects like tourism. This strategy could be seen to shift the blame for academic challenges onto external factors. One teacher (T3) highlights how the school principal's fear of being held accountable for poor performance led to the decision to replace a commercial subject (business studies) with tourism, which was perceived as less demanding to learners, by stating the following:

"The principal was afraid of the accountability, and they introduced tourism to replace business studies." (T3) (see appendices M line 93)

The finding that school leaders avoided accountability for poor performance in commercial subjects by phasing out the stream is supported by results reported by Leepo (2015), admitting that school leaders faced challenges with accountability due to underperformance. According to Leepo (2015), this situation affects decision-making, leading school leadership and management to prioritise or replace certain subjects, such as commercial subjects, to better align with performance metrics.

4.3.2.3 Theme 3: Lack of university recognition

4.3.2.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Limited university pathways

Content data analysis revealed that participants perceived commercial subjects as having less value for university admissions than STEM subjects. This perception was reason enough to discourage learners from pursuing commercial subjects, limiting their future academic and career pathways. The response by the teacher (T2) presented below highlights the extent to which learners were not properly guided or prepared for commercial subjects, thereby contributing to the perception that commercial subjects

offered fewer opportunities for university admission compared to other fields like engineering or physical sciences, thus:

"Learners are not encouraged to take commercial subjects by lacking the foundation for the subjects." (T2) (see appendices M line 108)

The finding that commercial subjects lack university recognition aligns with the current trend in South Africa, where STEM subjects are disproportionately prioritised and resourced over non-STEM fields, including commercial subjects. As highlighted by the St Albans Times (2024), this disparity reflects a societal bias favouring STEM subjects as more prestigious and valuable, while non-STEM subjects are often perceived as less important or practical. Further, the St Albans Times (2024) notes that societal pressure to pursue STEM subjects has influenced many students to choose science-related fields at university. This emphasis on STEM may be driven by perceived financial benefits and the associated societal prestige of these subjects. In contrast, non-STEM subjects, such as commercial subjects, may be undervalued, making students feel inadequate and underappreciated. Consequently, the lack of recognition for commercial subjects at university constitutes one of the most critical reasons for the permanent insignificance of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools.

4.3.2.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Perception of academic value

Data analysis revealed that participants viewed commercial subjects as subjects that offered fewer opportunities for higher education and career advancement compared to other subjects. This view, according to survey respondents, influenced learners' decisions and discouraged them from pursuing commercial subjects. The response by teacher (T6) presented below reflects the perception that commercial subjects lacked practical application, which caused a diminished sense of academic value and interest among learners.

"I think more especially, under commercial subjects, you're doing commercial subjects theoretically than practically. So, it simply means if you're doing

something theoretically, not physically, there won't be much interest in that. Just

imagine, more especially, we're teaching a lot of learners about a lot of money and businesses, but they cannot even own one. They are not even closer to businesses. That's why, more especially, they lose interest because they are not doing it physically." (T6) (see appendices M line 129)

The results indicate that commercial subjects are perceived as offering fewer opportunities for higher education and career advancement compared to other subjects. This aligns with the St Albans Times (2024), which asserts that STEM subjects are considered more prestigious and valuable, whereas non-STEM subjects are often viewed as less important or practical. This implies that viewing commercial subjects as less valuable can discourage learners from pursuing them, potentially limiting their educational and career options.

4.3.2.4 Theme 4 : Learner fear and underperformance

4.3.2.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1 : Fear of academic failure

Data analysis revealed that learners avoided commercial subjects like accounting and economics due to concerns about academic failure. These subjects' perceived difficulty or challenging nature discourages students from pursuing them. A teacher (T5) highlights how the fear of poor performance in challenging commercial subjects, such as accounting and economics, discouraged learners from pursuing commercial subjects.

"The problem is the underperformance of the school, and the learners have a fear of choosing Accounting and Economics."(T5) (see appendices M line 128)

The results that learners often avoided subjects perceived as difficult due to concerns about failing aligns well with the study by Smith (2021), who showed that fear of poor performance in subjects like accounting and economics discourages learners from pursuing these fields. According to Smith (2021), the possibility of this fear worsening is increased by underperforming schools, leading to a decline in enrolment in commercial subjects and eventual phase-out of the commercial stream. A study by Williams (2019)

showed that insufficient pedagogical content knowledge among teachers contributes to poor student outcomes, which fosters a fear of failure among learners. This finding implies that the resulting cycle of underperformance and fear contributes to the gradual phasing out of commercial subjects in schools.

4.3.2.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2 : Low confidence

Data analysis showed that learners have low confidence in their ability to handle the complexity of commercial subjects, contributing to lower enrollment rates in commercial streams in rural secondary schools. Participants reflected on the lack of confidence among learners in their ability to succeed in commercial subjects, particularly accounting and economics, which contributed to their hesitation in choosing these subjects by stating the following.

"The problem is the underperformance of the school, and the learners have a fear of choosing accounting and economics." (T3) (see appendices M line 128)

The finding that learners exhibited low confidence in their ability to handle the complexity of commercial subjects, thereby culminating in low enrollment rates in the commercial streams in rural secondary schools, agrees with results by Johnson (2020), showing that low confidence in academic abilities significantly impacts students' subject choices. Johnson (2020) identified learners' lack of confidence in handling complex material as a barrier to enrollment in commercial subjects. This is consistent with the results highlighting how low self-assurance contributes to hesitation in selecting subjects like accounting and economics. This finding implies that the lack of confidence among learners regarding their ability to succeed in commercial subjects may lead to a cycle of underachievement and reduced interest in these fields. Further, low enrollment rates in commercial streams in rural secondary schools can result in a shortage of skilled professionals in areas like business and finance, which are essential for economic development.

4.3.2.5 Theme 5: Cultural and societal expectations

4.3.2.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Community and societal pressure

Data analysis revealed that societal and parental pressure to pursue fields perceived as more prestigious or financially rewarding influence learners' decisions against commercial subjects. The resulting low enrolment contributed to the selection of commercial subjects targeted for phasing out by rural secondary schools. One teacher (T8) illustrates how societal and parental expectations influence learners' subject choices, thereby steering them away from commercial subjects due to the perceived prestige and recognition of other fields by stating the following:

"Many parents want their children to pursue fields like engineering or the hard sciences, as they believe these are the fields where national recognition and TV awards come from. This has shifted the focus away from commercial subjects."
(T8) (see appendices M line 156)

The finding that societal and parental pressure influences learners' decisions against commercial subjects aligns closely with Johnson and Lee's (2021) observations regarding the impact of parents' economic status on educational choices. Specifically, Johnson and Lee (2021) observed that families with limited financial resources often prioritise vocational training over commercial subjects because they view vocational paths more immediately applicable to job readiness. This economic perspective implies that it shapes parental expectations and subsequently influences learners' choices. For instance, when parents, driven by their economic concerns, encourage vocational training, they implicitly communicate a preference for fields perceived as offering more stable and immediate employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the present finding emphasises that the decision-making process for learners is not solely based on personal interests or abilities; instead, it is significantly affected by external pressures. The observations made by Johnson and Lee (2021) regarding the prioritisation of vocational training further illustrate that families with economic constraints are less likely to encourage their children to pursue commercial

subjects, as they may not perceive them as practical or beneficial in the current job market.

4.3.2.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Perception of contribution to National Development

Data analysis revealed that commercial subjects were perceived as less significant in contributing to learners' future or the country's development. This perception influenced learners' decisions and discouraged them from pursuing commercial subjects. Teacher (T8) illustrates the belief that specific fields, particularly engineering and hard sciences, are seen as more valuable for national development and recognition, influencing both parental guidance and learners' career choices, thus:

"Many parents want their children to pursue fields like engineering or the hard sciences, as they believe these are the fields where national recognition and TV awards come from." (T8) (see appendices M line 156)

The finding that commercial subjects are perceived as less significant in contributing to learners' futures or the country's development aligns with the study by Makhoba and Motsi (2024) on factors influencing learners' enrolment in these subjects. Makhoba and Motsi (2024) observed that learners and key influencers, such as parents and teachers, often do not fully recognise the practical value of commercial subjects in supporting career success or national development. This finding implies that commercial subjects are frequently seen as less impactful, particularly when compared to STEM fields or vocational tracks, which are more directly tied to economic advancement and job security.

4.3.3 ATTITUDES OF SCHOOL MANAGERS, TEACHERS, AND LEARNERS TOWARDS COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

The third objective of this study was to determine the attitude of school managers, teachers, and learners towards commercial subjects. Data analysis revealed 5 main themes: school management's attitude, teachers' attitude, learners' attitude, external influences on subject choices and the impact of enrollment on commercial subject

viability. These themes and sub-themes ascertain the attitudes of school managers, teachers, and learners towards commercial subjects.

4.3.3.1 Theme 1: School management's attitude towards commercial subjects

4.3.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Preference for high-performing subjects

Data analysis revealed that school managers often prioritise subjects like physical sciences and mathematics, which are perceived to have a higher potential for academic success. This focus may contribute to allocating more resources and attention to these subjects, potentially overshadowing the importance of commercial subjects. One teacher (T4) highlighted the school management's preference for subjects like physics and mathematics, which are often perceived to have higher academic potential, by stating the following:

"No, the number is declining. I think it's because the management, our principal, is not very interested in commercial subjects. The main focus is normally on Physics and Maths. And for that reason, they would simply phase out commercial subjects. They are also more interested in results." (T4) (see appendices M line 123)

As clearly demonstrated in the above-presented response, the school management's negative attitude towards commercial subjects has led to the sidelining of commercial subjects, particularly in the face of concerns about lower performance. This finding is supported by a study by Miller (2023) showing that school management's goals are primarily focused on academic achievement in core subjects such as mathematics and sciences, leading to the deprioritisation of commercial subjects. This finding implies that giving more preference to high-performing subjects will eventually lead to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools.

4.3.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Fear of accountability and results-based decisions

Data analysis revealed that some schools replaced commercial subjects like business studies with more accessible alternatives, such as tourism, to avoid potential

accountability for poor student performance. This strategy reflected the school management's focus on maintaining a positive public image and avoiding negative consequences associated with low academic results. To illustrate the potential impact of school management's concerns about poor performance on attitudes towards commercial subjects, teacher participant (T6) shared the following observation:

"The number is decreasing every day because school management, which is our principal, is not very interested in commercial subjects. The main focus is normally on physics and maths. And for that reason, they would simply phase out commercial subjects. They are more interested in results also. Perhaps it is because of the low performance of learners. They just decided we are just simply going to phase out the commercial subjects." (T6) (see appendices M line 125)

The finding that some schools opted to replace commercial subjects like Business Studies with less challenging alternatives, such as Tourism, to avoid accountability for poor student performance aligns with Smith's (2019) research. Smith (2019) observed that the perceived complexity of the curriculum contributes to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural areas. Furthermore, Smith noted that some school administrators view commercial subjects as more challenging to implement due to the need for specialised materials and business partnerships, which can discourage management from sustaining these programs.

4.3.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Lack of support for commercial subjects

Data analysis revealed that school management provided minimal encouragement and support for commercial subjects, which led to their marginalisation within the school curriculum. This lack of support contributes to a decline in learners' interest and enrollment in commercial subjects. To demonstrate the school management's lack of support and interest in promoting or encouraging commercial subjects, one teacher (T9) had the following to say:

"I was recruiting learners to ask the principal, and she is not interested." (T9) (see appendices M line 193)

The finding that there is a lack of support by school management towards commercial subjects correlates with the results of Johnson and Lee (2021). Johnson and Lee (2021) observed that schools cannot provide learners with multidisciplinary education due to various financial situations. This can be blamed on school management's inability to adequately canvas financial resources, which would help ensure equitable distribution of finances across streams. Often, budgetary constraints force school managers to eliminate some of the programmes they “consider” not critical for the learner, such as some commercial subjects. Further, a study by Garcia (2020) showed that a lack of training and professional development support led to the phasing out of commercial subjects. As a result, school leaders may not be adequately trained to manage or promote commercial education programs.

4.3.3.2 Theme 2: Teachers’ attitude towards commercial subjects

4.3.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Lack of resources and practical engagement

Data analysis revealed that teachers perceived commercial subjects as overly theoretical and lacking practical applications, diminishing learners’ interest and engagement. To illustrate the potential impact of teachers' lack of resources and practical engagement on their attitudes towards commercial subjects, some school principals shared the following observation:

“...the educators are not giving learners much about this subject. They have no information about this subject.” (P4) (see appendices M line 55)

The teachers are offering/providing learners minimal information on this subject, leaving them largely uninformed (P1) (see appendices M line 26)

The finding revealing the role of teachers in generating negative or positive attitudes towards commercial subjects is supported by results reached by Codina et al. (2018), reporting that teachers' approaches to teaching learners played a crucial role in their engagement, motivation, and academic performance. Further, the Project List (2024) observed that teachers’ attitude towards Business Studies was essential since it helped

stimulate learners' interest in learning Business Studies. Further, teachers' attitude towards Business Studies, among other issues, equips teachers with the ability to strengthen the confidence of their learners based on their capabilities. These negative perceptions towards commercial subjects imply that the commercial stream lacks dedicated advocates among teachers to communicate its true value and significance to potential learners effectively.

4.3.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Low enrolment and motivation

Data analysis revealed that the small number of learners choosing commercial subjects contributed to a lack of motivation among teachers, who felt that their efforts in these areas were underappreciated. The negative attitude of teachers towards commercial subjects has led to a decline in teaching quality and enthusiasm. The school principal (P2) highlights the challenge of low enrollment in commercial subjects, which in turn affects teacher motivation and their attitude towards teaching these subjects, thus:

"We have got a few learners from Grades 10, 11, and 12 under this school. We don't have big numbers in Grade 10, whether we can say we have 30 learners or 20 learners. The learners in Grade 12 are mostly less than 10." (P2) (see appendices M line 2)

The results reveal that low enrolment rates contribute to a lack of motivation among teachers, aligning with observations by Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020). They noted that teachers' negative perceptions of low enrollment in commercial streams perpetuate the ongoing decline in student enrollment in commercial subjects.

Particularly, Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020) observed that commercial teachers in rural Limpopo schools experience a hostile working environment, where challenges such as work overloading, lack of strategic resources, and the employment of non-subject specialists contribute to teacher dissatisfaction. The study further noted that low enrollment rates and inadequate support may lead to inadequate motivation among qualified teachers, resulting in decreased enthusiasm for promoting and teaching commercial subjects. This aligns with current results, which indicate that

negative teacher perceptions about low enrollment create a feedback loop, where diminishing enthusiasm among teachers further discourages student enrollment in commercial streams. This finding implies that it informs employment policies for rural secondary schools, specifically guiding the hiring practices for commercial subject teachers. Moreover, this finding suggests that issues related to teacher motivation and perception can substantially impact enrolment rates.

4.3.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Recruitment efforts and resistance from management

Data analysis showed that some teachers actively attempted to recruit learners into commercial subjects but encountered resistance from school management. This lack of support from management hindered efforts to promote and encourage learner enrollment in the commercial stream. One teacher (T9) indicated the school management's negative attitude towards commercial subjects, as evidenced by their lack of support and interest in teacher efforts to recruit students for these programmes, by sharing the following response:

"I was recruiting learners to ask the principal, and she is not interested." (T9) (see appendices M line 193)

The results that school management resisted teachers' efforts to enrol learners in commercial subjects align closely with Garcia (2020), who reported that both deliberate actions and inaction by school management contributed to the phasing out of these subjects. Garcia (2020) further found that the lack of training and professional development opportunities provided by school management for teachers played a significant role in the decline of commercial subjects. This finding implies that school management is critical in sustaining or phasing out school subject streams. For instance, when school leaders fail to support professional development for teachers or actively resist enrolment efforts, it leads to declining commercial subjects' enrolment rates.

4.3.3.3 Theme 3: Learners' attitude towards commercial subjects

4.3.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Fear of failure

Data analysis revealed that learners avoided commercial subjects like accounting and economics due to concerns about academic failure. The perceived challenging nature of commercial subjects discouraged learners from developing a positive attitude toward commercial subjects. The following response mentioned below highlights the concerns raised by the teacher (T4) about poor performance and its impact on learners' ability to develop positive attitudes towards commercial subjects:

"We have some learners, but there are not many because of the problem with the pass rate for this subject. Some learners are not performing well, while some are performing well, but learners are not interested." (T4) (see appendices M line 131)

The finding that fear of failure among learners discouraged enrollment in commercial subjects aligns with the observations made by Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020), which indicate that commercial subjects are facing extinction due to poor student performance. This suggests that students perceive commercial subjects as challenging, contributing to their fear of failure.

4.3.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Perceived lack of relevance

Data analysis revealed that learners perceived commercial subjects lacking practical relevance or real-world applications. This established view from survey participants reduced learners' motivation and interest in developing a good attitude towards commercial subjects. One teacher's (T8) response illustrates the perceived lack of value associated with commercial subjects, as evidenced by the following statement:

"It's disheartening to see the subjects lose relevance despite all the methods we try to implement to keep learners interested." (T8) (see appendices M line 152)

The finding that learners perceive commercial subjects as lacking practical relevance or real-world applications aligns closely with the observations of Thaba-Nkadimene and

Mmakola (2020), who noted the poor performance of learners in these subjects. This underperformance may stem from learners' inability to recognise the immediate benefits or practical applications of commercial subjects in their daily lives or future careers.

Furthermore, Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020) noted that teachers' poor performance was attributed to their inadequate pedagogical content knowledge and the use of non-subject specialists, which negatively impacted the teaching and perception of commercial subjects.

4.3.3.3.3 *Sub-theme 3.3: Peer and societal pressure*

Data analysis revealed that learners were influenced by societal pressures, including parental aspirations, to pursue subjects like engineering or the hard sciences, which are often perceived as more prestigious or financially rewarding. This led to a decline in interest and enrollment in commercial subjects. To illustrate that learners were influenced by their peers' performance and societal expectations, thereby affecting their attitudes towards commercial subjects, the teacher (T4) shared the following:

"We have some learners, but there are not so many because of the problem with the pass percentage of this subject. Some are not performing well, and some are performing well, but learners are not interested." (T4) (see appendices M line 131)

The response presented above shows that the fearful attitude developed by learners on account of underperformance relative to their peers discouraged them from pursuing commercial subjects. This finding is reinforced by Johnson and Lee (2021), who found that family circumstances compel learners to prioritise vocational training over commercial subjects, viewing the former as more relevant for job readiness. This implies that family influence plays a significant role in shaping learners' educational choices, leading them to favour vocational training as a more practical path to employment than commercial subjects.

4.3.3.4 Theme 4: External influences on subject choices

4.3.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Parental influence

Data analysis revealed that parental pressure to pursue high-status fields like engineering overshadowed the importance of commercial subjects, leading to a decline in student interest and enrollment. This has led to the development of parental influence, which has induced negative attitudes towards commercial subjects by school managers and teachers. The statement by the teacher (T4) presented below emphasises the role of parents in generating negative attitudes among learners towards commercial subjects:

“Throughout my teaching experience, I’ve observed that one of the main problems is parental influence. Many parents want their children to pursue fields like engineering or the hard sciences, as they believe these are the fields where national recognition and TV awards come from. This has shifted the focus away from commercial subjects.” (T4) (see appendices M line 143)

The finding suggests that parental pressure compelling learners to pursue prestigious fields like engineering undermines the importance of commercial subjects, leading to a decline in student interest and enrollment. This aligns with Johnson and Lee (2021), who discovered that family pressures, influenced by socio-economic status, motivate learners to prioritise vocational subjects over commercial ones. This implies that parental pressure significantly impacts learners' choices, contributing to the decline of commercial subjects.

4.3.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Systemic circulars and policies

Data analysis revealed that policies limiting the number of educators based on learner enrollment numbers in specific subjects contributed to the de-emphasis of commercial subjects or, rather, negative attitudes developing among managers and learners. This led to fewer resources and opportunities for these subjects, making them less attractive to students. One teacher (T9) said the following in support of this finding:

"I cannot say much, but it means I can say the circular. There is a circular that talks about the number of educators and the streams. That is why maybe educators are not interested because if small learners or fewer learners are not taking it, which means the educators are not giving learners much about this subject, they have no information about this subject" (T9) (see appendices M line 157)

The results indicate that policies limiting educator numbers based on learner enrollment in specific subjects contribute to the de-emphasis of commercial subjects, which aligns well with results reported by Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020). Particularly, the study observed that the shortage of teachers in rural Limpopo Province schools perpetuates the use of non-subject specialists, which adversely affects the quality of instruction in commercial subjects. This shortage can be attributed to policies that restrict the number of educators based on student enrolment in specific subjects, leading to a de-emphasis on commercial subjects and contributing to their phasing out. The results demonstrate that such policies hinder the hiring of qualified teachers, ultimately impacting students' learning experiences and engagement with commercial subjects. This finding implies that it fosters negative attitudes among both school managers and learners.

4.3.3.5 Theme 5: Impact of enrollment on commercial subject viability

4.3.3.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Declining learner numbers in commercial subjects

Data analysis revealed that the low enrolment in commercial subjects from Grades 10 to 12 contributed to a negative perception that commercial subjects were perceived as less viable and less competitive, thereby discouraging further interest. The resulting negative attitude towards commercial subjects has influenced student choices and created a self-fulfilling prophecy, as fewer learners enrolled in the commercial stream, which reduced resources and support, further diminishing the commercial stream's appeal to learners. One teacher (T2) highlights the specific decline in enrolment numbers for commercial subjects across grades, particularly the low numbers in higher grades:

“No, maybe because we don't have big numbers in Grade 10, whether we can say we have 30 learners or 20 learners. The learners in grade are mostly is less than 10.” (T2) (see appendices M line 96)

The finding that the low enrolment in commercial subjects from Grades 10 to 12 contributed to a negative perception of commercial subjects aligns well with the results by Thaba-Nkadamene and Mmakola (2020). Thaba-Nkadamene and Mmakola (2020) observed that poor student performance in commercial subjects has led to their phasing out, which fosters a belief that these subjects are less valuable. Furthermore, Thaba-Nkadamene and Mmakola (2020) observed that teachers' inadequate pedagogical content knowledge and reliance on non-subject specialists exacerbate this negative perception, reinforcing the notion that commercial subjects are not worth pursuing. This cycle of low enrollment, poor performance, and negative perceptions ultimately undermines the importance of commercial subjects in the educational landscape. This implies that learners are motivated to view commercial subjects as less viable and competitive, discouraging further interest in these fields.

4.3.3.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: School stream decisions based on numbers

Thematic content data analysis revealed that school management's decision to phase out or reduce focus on commercial subjects was influenced by low learner numbers and associated constraints in teacher allocation. This reflects how school managers had a negative attitude towards commercial subjects. One teacher participant (T9) highlighted how the school's decisions about subject streams and educator engagement were influenced by the number of students enrolled in the subject, thus:

“There is a circular that is talking about the number of educators and the streams, which is why maybe educators are not interested because if small learners or fewer learners are not taking it, which means the educators are not giving learners much about this subject, they have no information about this subject.” (T9) (see appendices M line 157)

The decision to base subject streams on enrollment numbers may have contributed to a negative perception of commercial subjects among managers, learners, and teachers, ultimately leading to their decline in the curriculum. This finding aligns well with Thaba-Nkadamene and Mmakola (2020), noting that poor performance of learners in commercial subjects contributes to a decline in enrollment, which, in turn, contributes to negative perceptions towards commercial subjects. This implies that the decrease in student numbers influences school management to phase out or diminish their focus on commercial subjects. Further, this implies that the number of learners enrolled in commercial subjects affects teacher allocation decisions, leading to management opting for non-specialist teachers in response to lower enrollment.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter was to present research results following the thematic content data analysis on transcribed interview data collected from school principals, teachers, and learners from rural secondary schools in Limpopo Province. Data analysis identified factors such as policy factors on education and curriculum changes, school-level factors, student-level factors, socio-economic factors and community and society factors. Moreover, data analysis revealed reasons for phasing out commercial subjects like parental influence, school management prioritisation, lack of university recognition, learner fear and underperformance, and cultural and societal expectations. Data analysis also examined the attitudes of school managers, teachers and learners towards commercial subjects to reveal that, overall, commercial subject teachers exhibited positive attitudes towards commercial subjects. In contrast, school managers and learners exhibited negative attitudes towards commercial subjects. The next chapter discusses research results.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of this study's key results and conclusions, structured into several main sections. First, it outlines the significant results from the literature, synthesising insights from existing studies to establish a foundation for understanding the study's context. Next, it highlights the significant results from the empirical study, with a focus on themes emerging from interview data collected from teachers, principals and learners. The chapter then concludes, summarising the present study's core insights and implications. Following this, specific recommendations on the study are provided to address the issues identified and are aimed at stakeholders and policymakers. Lastly, the chapter provides recommendations for further studies, proposing future research directions to deepen knowledge and address any identified gaps in the field.

5.2 MAJOR RESULTS FROM EMPIRICAL STUDY (FROM INTERVIEWS)

5.2.1 Research Question 1: What are the factors contributing to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural Limpopo secondary schools?

Some of the major research results summarising factors leading to the decline of commercial subjects in rural Limpopo schools are presented in Section 4.3.1 in Chapter 4. The identified range of factors includes educational policy, institutional priorities, student preferences, socio-economic challenges, and community influences. Education policies, particularly those favouring STEM subjects, have led to funding constraints for commercial streams, discouraging enrollment. Institutional factors also play a significant role, with school leaders often prioritising high pass-rate subjects over commercial ones,

compounded by a shortage of qualified commercial subject teachers and inadequate resources. Consequently, commercial subjects are perceived as less viable and appealing to students.

Student-related factors include declining interest in commercial subjects due to perceived limited job prospects and a preference for more innovative fields. Socio-economic factors, such as limited job opportunities for commercial graduates and resource shortages in rural secondary schools, further diminish the perceived value of commercial subjects by learners. Community expectations and parental influence also steer students toward subjects like science and engineering, which are considered more prestigious. This study showed that the combination of these factors contributes to low enrollment and a gradual phasing out of commercial subjects in Limpopo rural secondary schools.

5.2.1.1 Research Question 2: Why are commercial subjects being phased out in rural secondary schools?

The present study revealed that commercial subjects in Limpopo rural secondary schools are being phased out due to several interconnected reasons, including parental influence, school management priorities, limited university recognition, and students' fear of underperformance. The study revealed that parents often encouraged students to pursue more prestigious fields like engineering and sciences, viewing them as financially rewarding, which discourages enrollment in commercial subjects. School management further exacerbated this trend by prioritising high-performing subjects and neglecting commercial streams. Teachers appealed to management and the Department of Education for equal support, but the focus on STEM subjects persisted, leading to a reduced emphasis on commercial education.

The lack of university recognition for commercial subjects is also another reason deterring students, as career paths in higher education often prioritise STEM fields, reinforcing the perception that commercial subjects offer limited job or career opportunities. Moreover, the results showed that students frequently feared academic failure in complex subjects like accounting and economics, which contributed to declining interest and low enrollment. This lack of confidence and fear of underperformance created a cycle where students avoided commercial subjects, resulting in fewer enrollments and, ultimately, the gradual phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools.

5.2.2 Research Question 3: What is the attitude of school managers, teachers and learners towards commercial subjects?

The results on the attitude of school managers, teachers and learners towards commercial subjects are presented in Section 4.4.1 of Chapter 4. The present study found that school managers generally held a negative attitude towards commercial subjects, prioritising high-performing subjects like Science and Mathematics for resource allocation. The study established that subject stream preference stemmed from concerns about academic outcomes and the desire to avoid accountability for lower-performing study streams. As a result, commercial subjects were often replaced by easier alternatives to maintain the school's reputation, and minimal support was provided for commercial streams, leading to reduced student interest and enrollment. Moreover, budget constraints and a focus on core subjects further marginalised commercial education within Limpopo rural school curricula.

Teachers also exhibited unfavourable attitudes towards commercial subjects, with many prioritising science-related fields due to higher success rates. A lack of qualified teachers in commercial subjects contributed to this bias, leading to subpar student performance and reinforcing the perception that commercial subjects were not viable.

This view was compounded by the belief among some teachers that career prospects in streams like accounting and business were less lucrative than those in science and technology. Learners, influenced by fear of academic failure, perceived irrelevance, and societal expectations, tended to avoid commercial subjects in favour of fields viewed as more prestigious or practical. External pressures from parents and university requirements further discouraged students from enrolling in commercial subjects, leading to their decline in rural secondary schools.

5.2.3 Research Question 4: Which strategies can be used to salvage the phasing out of commercial subjects?

Based on empirical results presented in Sections 4.3.1, 4.3.2, and 4.3.3 of Chapter 4, the following strategies are proposed for salvaging the phasing out of commercial subjects.

5.2.3.1 Strategy 1: Enhancing awareness and value of commercial subjects

In order to enhance awareness and value of commercial subjects, it is essential for schools in Limpopo and the Department of Education to launch educational campaigns targeted at parents, students, and school management that emphasise the importance and relevance of commercial subjects in today's job market. This can be achieved by using the success stories of individuals who have pursued careers in business accounting and finance to illustrate the available jobs or career opportunities. Moreover, organising workshops and seminars for parents and community members is also another strategy that can be used to ensure that the long-term benefits of commercial education are effectively discussed, such as job readiness and financial literacy. This will further reinforce the significance of commercial subjects in preparing students for their future careers.

5.2.3.2 Strategy 2: Curriculum and subject support

To enhance the relevance and appeal of commercial subjects, rural secondary schools must collaborate with educational authorities to revise the curriculum by integrating practical elements, such as project-based learning, case studies, and real-world applications that demonstrate the significance of subjects like accounting and business studies. Furthermore, schools must also advocate for policies that mandate students to take at least one commercial subject to ensure that all learners gain exposure to commercial subject streams, thereby fostering a broader understanding and appreciation of commercial education.

5.2.3.3 Strategy 3: Teacher training and development

In order to improve the quality of education in commercial subjects, it is essential for rural schools to implement ongoing training and professional development programmes for teachers, focusing on enhancing their knowledge and teaching methods. These programmes can include mentorship initiatives and collaborations with industry professionals to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Furthermore, prioritising the recruitment of qualified teachers for commercial subjects will allow rural schools to ensure that students receive high-quality instruction, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes and greater interest in commercial subjects.

5.2.3.4 Strategy 4: Improving resources and infrastructure

In order to enhance the learning experience in commercial subjects, rural secondary school management and leadership must allocate resources equitably. This helps to ensure that available subject streams receive the same level of support as science subjects, including access to teaching materials, technology, and extracurricular activities focused on business and finance. Moreover, establishing partnerships with local businesses and organisations can provide students with valuable internships, mentorship opportunities, and exposure to real-world business scenarios, thereby enriching their educational experience and better preparing them for future careers in the commercial sector.

5.2.3.5 Strategy 5: Encouraging student engagement

In order to foster greater interest in commercial subjects, a key strategy informed by present research results is to incorporate technology and innovation into the learning process, utilising interactive software, online simulations, and gamified experiences that make the material more engaging for students. Moreover, organising extracurricular activities such as clubs, competitions, and events centred on entrepreneurship, finance, and business skills can further spark student interest and provide practical understanding, allowing learners to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts and cultivate a passion for commercial subjects.

5.2.3.6 Strategy 6: Addressing external influences

In order to mitigate external influences on student choices regarding commercial subjects, it is crucial to implement parental involvement initiatives that engage parents in school activities and decision-making processes, fostering a better understanding of the importance of commercial subjects while encouraging their support. Further, providing comprehensive information about job opportunities related to commercial streams can help both students and parents recognise the practical benefits and career prospects associated with pursuing commercial subjects, ultimately enhancing their appeal and relevance in today's job market.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results presented in this study regarding the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools, the following conclusions are made:

First, parental influence plays a significant role in shaping students' subject choices. Particularly, the study demonstrated that parental influence often steers learners towards streams that are perceived as more prestigious, such as science and technology. This, in turn, diminishes learners' interest in commercial subjects. This finding underscores the need to implement targeted awareness campaigns to educate parents about the value of commercial education in fostering job readiness and financial literacy.

Second, the attitudes of school management and teachers have been shown to have a significant impact on the perception and enrollment in commercial subjects. Particularly, this study showed that the preference for high-performing subjects and a lack of support for commercial education contributed to the marginalisation of commercial subjects within the curriculum. This finding highlights the necessity for policy changes that advocate for equal prioritization of all subject streams and the inclusion of practical elements in the curriculum to demonstrate their relevance.

Third, the shortage of qualified teachers and insufficient training was shown to negatively affect the quality of education in commercial subjects. Therefore, investing in professional development programs and prioritising the recruitment of qualified educators would be essential for improving student outcomes and enhancing the overall perception of commercial streams.

Lastly, this study revealed that addressing external influences, including societal and peer pressures, was crucial for reshaping students' attitudes towards commercial subjects. Consequently, engaging parents in the educational process and providing clear information about job opportunities in commercial fields can help alleviate fears and misconceptions, ultimately encouraging students to pursue commercial subjects.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING THE STUDY

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to address the decline of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools:

Research Question 1: What are the factors contributing to the phasing out of commercial subjects in rural Limpopo secondary schools?

Recommendation 1: Implement comprehensive awareness campaigns

To counteract the phasing out of commercial subjects, educational authorities should launch comprehensive awareness campaigns targeting parents, students, and school staff. These campaigns should emphasise the relevance and value of commercial education in today's job market, using success stories and statistics to illustrate the diverse career opportunities available in business and finance. Further, it is recommended that workshops and seminars be used effectively to engage the community, discussing the long-term benefits of commercial subjects, including job readiness and financial literacy, thereby fostering a supportive environment that encourages students to pursue commercial subjects.

Recommendation 2: Advocate for policy changes to support commercial education

It is recommended that policy changes be advocated to ensure that commercial subjects are given equal importance within the school curriculum. This will include making at least one commercial subject mandatory for all students, thus guaranteeing exposure to these essential fields. Moreover, collaboration with educational authorities is also recommended to ensure the revision of the curriculum by incorporating practical elements, such as project-based learning and real-world applications. This will help clearly demonstrate the relevance of commercial subjects. Further, such efforts will help shift perceptions and increase student interest in pursuing commercial education, thereby ultimately reducing its phasing out of commercial subjects.

Research Question 2: Why are commercial subjects being phased out in rural secondary schools?

Recommendation 1: Enhance teacher training and support for commercial subjects

It is recommended that teacher training and support be enhanced specifically for educators of these subjects in order to address the declining interest in commercial subjects in rural secondary schools. Implementing targeted professional development programs that focus mainly on innovative teaching methods, curriculum relevance, and industry knowledge would help empower teachers to deliver engaging and effective lessons. Further, recruiting qualified teachers with expertise in commercial subjects will help rural secondary schools improve the quality of education and inspire student interest in fields such as accounting and business studies.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen community and parental engagement

It is recommended that schools strengthen community and parental engagement by actively involving parents in school activities and decision-making processes in order to combat the phasing out of commercial subjects. Initiatives that inform parents about the job opportunities related to commercial education help shift perceptions and promote support for commercial subjects. Furthermore, schools must organise community events that showcase the practical benefits of commercial subjects, thereby helping to build a culture that values and encourages student enrollment in commercial subject areas.

Research Question 3: What is the attitude of school managers, teachers and learners towards commercial subjects?

Recommendation 1: Foster positive attitudes through awareness campaigns

In order to improve the attitudes of school managers, teachers, and learners towards commercial subjects, this study recommends launching awareness campaigns that highlight the relevance and benefits of these subjects in today's job market. These campaigns can feature success stories from alumni who have pursued careers in business and finance, showcasing the opportunities available. By involving all stakeholders (for example, school management, teachers, parents, and students) in the

discussions about the importance of commercial education, rural secondary schools can create a more supportive environment that values these subjects and encourages enrollment of learners in commercial streams.

Recommendation 2: Provide Incentives for Teacher Advocacy and Support In order to shift the prevailing attitudes among teachers and school managers, this study recommends creating incentives for advocating commercial subjects. Schools could implement recognition programs for teachers who actively promote commercial education or demonstrate innovative teaching practices in commercial subjects. Moreover, this study recommends offering professional development opportunities to equip teachers with the necessary skills to teach commercial subjects effectively, thereby enhancing their confidence and willingness to support commercial subjects.

Research Question 4: Which strategies can be used to salvage the phasing out of commercial subjects?

Recommendation 1: Curriculum enhancement and integration of real-world applications

In order to salvage the phasing out of commercial subjects, this study recommends curriculum enhancement through integrating practical elements and real-world applications. For instance, by collaborating with educational authorities to include project-based learning, case studies, and hands-on experiences, the relevance of subjects like accounting and business studies can be demonstrated effectively. Further, making the curriculum more engaging and applicable to real-life scenarios will make students more likely to appreciate the value of commercial subjects, leading to increased interest and enrollment.

Recommendation 2: Establish business partnerships for experiential learning It is recommended that schools form partnerships with local businesses and organisations that can provide students with valuable experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, mentorships, and exposure to real-world business scenarios. These partnerships can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application,

making commercial subjects more appealing to students. By showcasing the direct benefits and career pathways associated with commercial education, rural schools can enhance student engagement and motivation, ultimately contributing to the revitalisation of commercial subjects in the curriculum.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Based on the results presented in this work, the following 3 topics are proposed for future research exploration.

Topic 1: Impact of parental influence on subject choice in rural schools Future research could explore the extent to which parental perceptions and attitudes towards commercial subjects affect students' choices in rural secondary schools. This study could investigate how parental involvement and educational awareness campaigns can alter attitudes and promote the enrollment of students in commercial subjects.

Topic 2: Evaluation of curriculum innovations in commercial education A study examining the effectiveness of newly implemented curriculum enhancements in commercial subjects (for example, project-based learning and real-world applications) could provide insights into their impact on student engagement and performance. This research could evaluate different pedagogical strategies and their influence on revitalizing interest in commercial subjects.

Topic 3: Longitudinal study on career outcomes for graduates of commercial programmes

Conducting a longitudinal study tracking the career trajectories of students who graduated with commercial subjects in rural areas could reveal valuable insights into the relevance of commercial subjects in the job market. This research could help identify barriers to employment and the long-term benefits of commercial education, ultimately guiding improvements in educational practices and policies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A School consent



NWARIDI
SECONDARY SCHOOL

REG NO. 916321262
BOX 176
MASHAU
0943
TEL/FAX 015 873
1761

CONFIRMATION LETTER: MAANDA N

The above matter refers

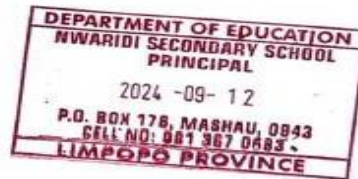
The letter serves to attest to the facts that the school of Nwaridi secondary has given consent to MR Maanda N to conduct research.

Our SMT, educators and learners cooperated and the research was conducted in the best possible perspective.

Thanking you in anticipation



Principal



Appendix B Permission letter circuit



Limpopo Province
Department of Education
VHURONGA TWO CIRCUIT

P/Bag X1248
VUWANI
0952
Tel: (015) 961 5417
Fax: 0159615417

Enq : Thivhafuni TJ
Cell : 082 094 4500
Email address: takalani25@gmail.com

19 August 2024

To: Maanda N

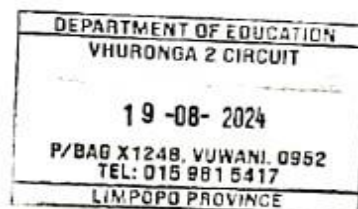
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN VHURONGA 2 CIRCUIT

1. The above matter refers.
2. Vhuronga 2 Circuit Office wishes to inform you that permission to conduct research is granted on condition that you adhere to research ethics.
3. Furthermore, you are requested to make arrangements with the principals of schools where data will be collected on time.
4. Kindly share the findings of your research study upon completion.
5. All the best with your research study.


Thivhafuni TJ

Vhuronga 2 Circuit

19/08/2024
Date



Vuwani Magistrate Buildings, Vuwani 0952,
Tel/Fax 015 961 5417 Cell No: 079 497 1884

The heartland of Southern Africa- development is about people

Appendix C Permission letter district



CONFIDENTIAL

Ref : 12/1/10/8

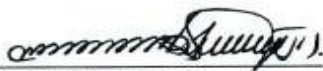
Enq: Ravele N.S

Contact No : 082 868 2663

TO : Maanda N
071 134 3635

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH ON THE SUBJECT: '*The phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools in Vhembe West ,Limpopo, in South Africa*'

1. This serves to inform you that your request for permission to conduct research on the topic: *The phasing out of commercial subjects in rural secondary schools in Vhembe West ,Limpopo, in South Africa* 'has been granted.
2. You are advised to observe all the conditions provided in the provincial approval letter during collection of information from the research subjects.
3. Kindly inform the Circuit Manager and principals of schools of interest prior to commencing your study.
4. Best wishes in your academic endeavours.


DISTRICT DIRECTOR

2024/09/11
DATE

Appendix D Provincial consent



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 2/2/2 Enq: Makola MC Tel No: 015 290 9448 E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Maanda N
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
maandanaledzani@gmail.com

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **"THE PHASE OUT OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VHEMBE WEST , IN SOUTH AFRICA."**
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 District or Circuit Office and the School concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
 - 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).
 - 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH : MAANDA N Page 1

Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

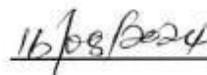
The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people

- 4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
- 5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.



Makola MC (Ph.D)

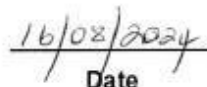


Date

Director: Integrated Planning, Research & Reporting



Mr. Molope NM



Date

ACTING DDG: CORPORATE SERVICES

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH : MAANDA N Page 2

Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
Tel:015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

The heartland of Southern Africa-development is about people

Appendix E Consent form and instruction

CONSENT FORM

Tel. 0711343635

School of Education
University of Venda
P/Bag x5050
THOHOYANDOU
0950

10 February 2024

Dear: Principal/learners/ and teacher

We are currently conducting research into the factors that influence phasing out of commercial subjects by schools at the FET level in the Limpopo Province. We have been granted permission by the Limpopo Education Department and the Districts to conduct research in the school, as it has been selected to take part in this research. Kindly grant me permission to conduct the study and the following will be considered:

1. An interview will be conducted, and it will take approximately 30 minutes.
2. There is no known risk involved in the research.
3. There are no costs involved.

You are assured that your identity and responses to this interview will be kept confidential at all times and that your responses will not be made available to any unauthorized user.

Should you have any queries or comments, you are welcome to contact me.

.....

MAANDA N

CONSENT

In terms of the ethical requirements of the University of Venda, you are now requested to complete the following section:

I, have read this letter and understand the terms involved.

On condition that the information provided by me is treated as confidential at all times, I hereby (MARK the appropriate section).

☐ give consent.

☐ do NOT give consent that the results may be used for research purposes.

Signature:

Appendix F Interview schedule for school principal

This is the interview schedule for schools that are planning to phase out commercial subjects. The aim of this interview schedule is to find out why these schools are planning to phase out commercial subjects.

1. Why are you planning to phase out commercial subject?
2. Did you inform the Department of your intentions to phase out commercial subjects?
3. Did you involve SGB members of your plans to phase out commercial subject?
4. Did you involve the teacher unions on your plans of phasing out commercial subject?
5. What are the perceptions of commercial subject teachers in the phasing out of commercial subject?
6. What do you think can be done to retain commercial subjects in your school?
7. What do you think is the root cause of phasing out commercial subjects at school?
8. Do you as the principal encourage or discourage learners from taking commercial subjects?

Appendix G Interview schedule for school manager/principal

This is the interview schedule for schools that are still offering commercial subject.

1. Do you still have the consistent number of learners as you had from 2018 to 2024?
2. What could be the reason for a decline/increase in the number of learners?
3. What motivates you to continue offering commercial subject amid all the challenges?
4. What kind of assistance would you need to continuously retain commercial subjects?
5. Is there a specific subject within the stream that learners struggle with? If yes, has anything been done to remedy the situation?
6. Do you think SMT plays role in learners choosing their streams?
7. Do you as school principal promotes (host competitions) which encourage stimulates learner interest learners to take commercial subjects?

Appendix H Interview schedule for teachers

This interview schedule is for teachers at schools that have phased out commercial subject. The aim of the interview is to find out the reasons for phasing out commercial subject.

1. Why did the school phase out commercial subject?
2. As a commercial subject teacher, how did you feel when commercial subjects were phased out?
3. What do you think can be done to reinstate commercial subjects in your school?
4. What do you think should have been done to prevent phasing out of commercial subjects?
5. Do you think that you as educator are doing your best in making learners to love or develop interest in commercial stream?
6. What are the challenges that you as a commercial educator encounter at school?
7. Do you as an educator have enough resources that help you to make commercial subjects' fun for learners?
8. What are the stigma that you encounters within the school or in the community?

Appendix I Interview schedule for departmental heads /teachers

This interview schedule is for teachers in schools that are planning to phase out of commercial subjects?

1. Are you aware that commercial subjects are going to be phased out as a stream? Motivate
2. Where you consulted about the phasing out of the commercial subjects?
3. what do you think are reasons for the school's intention of phasing out commercial subjects?
4. What is your perception of the plans for phasing out commercial subjects?
5. Are the learners encouraged to do commercial subjects when they come to FET level?
6. What do you think can be done to retain commercial subjects in your school?
7. What is the stigma that you encounter within the school or in the community?
8. Do you think that you as an educator are doing your best in making learners to love or develop interest in commercial stream?

Appendix J Interview schedule for departmental heads/ teachers

This interview schedule is for schools that are still offering commercial subjects.

1. Do you still have the consistent number of learners as you had from 2018 to 2024?
2. What could be the reason for a decline/increase in the number of learners?
3. What motivates you to continue offering commercial subjects amid all the challenges?
4. What kind of assistance would you need to continuously retain commercial subjects?
5. Do you as an educator have enough resources that help you to make commercial subjects' fun for learning?
6. Do you think educator have an influence learner choosing their streams?
Motive.

Appendix K Interview schedule for learners doing commercial subjects.

This interview schedule is for learners who are doing commercial subject at schools. The aim of the interview is to find out the reasons for phasing out commercial subject.

1. Were you encouraged by someone to choose commercial subjects? If not, what made you to choose them?
2. Is there a particular subject in the stream that you find challenging? If yes, which one?
3. What do you think could be done to help you to better understand the difficult subject within commercial stream?
4. Is the support you receive towards learning as a commercial subjects learner enough?
5. Do you think that there are uncertainties with your career as a learner doing commercial subjects?
6. Is there any support or orientation that you as a learner receive prior choosing your streams?
7. Do you feel motivated or discouraged to take commercial subjects?
8. Are you having any role 1models' people who enrolled commercial subjects and become successful?

Appendix L Interview schedule for learners not doing commercial subjects.

This interview schedule is for learners who are not doing commercial subject at schools.

The aim of the interview is to find out the reasons for phasing out commercial subject.

1. Did you consider commercial subjects when choosing subjects in FET?
2. what made you to not choose commercial subjects when choosing FET subjects
3. Do you think commercial subject are relevant in today's world?
4. Which subjects among the commercial subjects discourage you as learners from enrolling in the commercial stream.
5. Is there any support or orientation that you as a learner receive prior choosing your stream?

Appendix M Transcriptions

VERBATIM INFORMATION FOR PRINCIPAL

STILL OFFERING COMMERCIAL

Question 1 Researcher	Do you still have the consistent number of learners as you had from 2018 to 2024?	1
Principal 1	No, the number is declining each and every year since 2017	2
Principal 2	We have got a few learners from grade 10, 11, and 12 under this school. We don't have much numbers in grade 10 whether we can say we got 30 learners or 20 learners. The learners that are in grade 12 mostly are less than 10."	3
Principal 3	we don't have a consistent number. This is because we have three streams, and many learners are taking the other two streams.	4
Question 2 Researcher	What could be the reason for a decline/increase in the number of learners?	5
Principal 1	When students consider the future job projections for commercial subjects on the job market Learners are not doing very well especially in accounting	6
Principal 2	I think is poor performance in EMS in grade 9.	7
Principal 3	We do have qualified teachers, but the learners themselves are not interested in the subject. They tend to perform well in management topics, but struggle with accounting."	8
Question 3 Researcher	What motivates you to continue offering commercial subject amid all the challenges?	9
Principal 1	This is because they help in understanding financial principles, and I believe in giving each learner a chance. Thus, I can't deny	10

	those who want to study commercial subjects an opportunity.	
Principal 2	This is because the country can only operate with commercial subjects. So, I believe that things will turn around in one of the good days.	11
Principal 3	This is because commercial subjects have so much opportunity. For instance, you can work as a teller, admin, and owner the company.	12
Question 4 Researcher	What kind of assistance would you need to continuously retain commercial subjects?	13
Principal 1	At least If we got more commercial educators, because we have only 2 commercial educators.... One teacher accounting and economic grade 10-12 only and the other business studies and EMS	14
Principal 2	The government must make learners aware by showing learners that there are various careers you can follow when doing commercial subjects like what they are doing in the Science stream	15
Principal 3	The Department of Education, stakeholders, and municipalities must encourage learners to choose commercial subjects by motivating and supporting learners who are doing grades 8 and 9.	16
Question 5 Researcher	Is there a specific subject within the stream that learners struggle with? If yes, has anything been done to remedy the situation?	17
Principal 1	Mathematics	18
Principal 2	Accounting	19
Principal 3	All of them excluding business studies	20
Question 6 Researcher	Do you think SMT plays role in learners choosing their streams?	21

Principal 1	I can't say yes but I encourage learners to choose commercial subjects by advertising them to learners at the beginning of the year when learners have to choose their stream.	22
Principal 2	No, they do not play a role in learners choosing their streams. This is because we are not used to it as parents, and learners are the ones to decide. We, as teachers, will only guide them based on their performance, but they are the ones to decide.	23
Principal 3	No, they do not play a role in learners choosing their streams. This is because each learner has the freedom to do what they like.	24
Question 7 Researcher	Do you as school principal promotes (host competitions) which encourage stimulates learner interest learners to take commercial subjects?	25
Principal 1	The teachers are offering/providing learners minimal information on this subject, leaving them largely uninformed	26
Principal 2	No, we don't host any competitions. This is because we were not aware of having a competition.	27
Principal 3	Yes, we do participate in reserve bank competitions.	28

PLANNING TO PHASE OUT COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

Question 1 Researcher	Why are you planning to phase out commercial subject?	29
Principal 4	Learners are no longer choosing this stream, so we can't keep stream without learners	30
Principal 5	the pass rate in commercial subjects is decreasing, which results in many learners not being interested in choosing commercial subjects. Thus, as a result, we have less than 10 learners in each grade who are doing commercial subjects and if we keep this stream other teacher will have heavy load in order for us to accommodate commercial teachers with less teaching load.	31
Principal 6	Our have only 12 educators as we speak, so we can't afford to	32

	have three streams with 12 educators.	
Question 2 Researcher	Did you inform the Department of your intentions to phase out commercial subjects?	33
Principal 4	Yes, we have informed the department, and they have recommended that the commercial stream be phased out gradually, starting from grade 10 and then the following year, grade 11.	34
Principal 5	Actual it was the advice from circuit to phase out commercial stream as we have less than 13 educators at our school	35
Principal 6	Before we contacted the circuits, we met with the SGB and the parents, showing them the difficulties, we are encountering in having many streams. We even showed them that there are few learners doing the commercial stream, so we can't take a risk, while many learners are enrolling for the general stream.	36
Question 3 Researcher	Did you involve SGB members of your plans to phase out commercial subject?	37
Principal 4	Yes, we have involved the SGB members, and they called the parents of learners who are doing commercial subjects and reached an agreement.	38
Principal 5	We met with them and showed them the possibility and impossibility of having many streams in the school while lacking human resources. They agreed, looking at the number of learners and teachers in the school. Conversely, we showed them that there is a workload. All in all, they say it's no good; thus, the school should have all the streams, but they probably say that due to a lack of information.	39
Principal 6	We had the meeting with them and we agreed to phased them out	40
Question 4 Researcher	Did you involve the teacher unions on your plans of phasing out commercial subject?	41
Principal 4	Yes, we have discussed it with site steward and asked them to	42

	inform their various unions.	
Principal 5	The branch was not informed, but we had a meeting with the teacher, where most of us are SADTU members, and we agreed to phase out commercial subjects because they have the workload.	43
Principal 6	we informed them sir.	44
Question 5 Researcher	What are the perceptions of commercial subject teachers in the phasing out of commercial subject?	46
Principal 4	They are disappointed because they must be transferred to other schools. So, there is a fear of the unknown, and they have decided that those in grade 10 should do Business studies with other subjects.	47
Principal 5	We had 1 educator for commercial subjects, which was a relief to her because she was supposed to teach all the commercial subjects.	48
Principal 6	It is important to have high enrolment in the school because you will find that some learners in the community are doing commercial subjects in other schools where they are supposed to use transport. Thus, If the community can play a role by enrolling their learners in the school, we can reinstate commercial subjects.	49
Question 6 Researcher	What do you think can be done to retain commercial subjects in your school?	50
Principal 4	First, we need to go back to basics. We need a proper foundation where teachers with knowledge should teach commerce because now they take anyone who is not qualified to teach our commerce. Of which that subject on its own needs someone with knowledge to teach. Teachers should be trained with knowledge and skills to teach commercial subjects	51
Principal 5	Commercial subjects should be advertised in grade 9	52
Principal 6	Hiring more qualified commercial teacher, especial accounting teacher	53

Question 7	What do you think is the root cause of phasing out commercial subjects at school?	54
Principal 4	the educators are not giving learners much about this subject, they have no information about this subject	55
Principal 5	This is because learners develop negative attitudes towards commercial subjects because of poor performance in Economics Management and Sciences (EMS), as teachers who are teaching grades 8 and 9 are not qualified to teach EMS.	56
Principal 6	It is a decrease in the number of learners choosing commercial subjects.	57
Question 8 Researcher	Do you as the principal encourage or discourage learners from taking commercial subjects?	58
Principal 4	I encourage learners to choose commercial subjects by advertising them to learners at the beginning of the year when learners have to choose their stream.	59
Principal 5	It is a parent responsibility not us	60
Principal 6	That is learner and parent decisions, so I don't	61

PHASED OUT COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

Question 1 Researcher	Why have you phased out commercial subjects at your school and why accounting specifically?	62
Principal 7	It's because the enrolment was very low, and very few learners were participating in commercial subjects. Thus, we were forced to phase out commercial subjects because even a teacher-learner ratio was not workable.	63
Principal 8	"One reason is the lack of job opportunities in commercial subjects. Students often go to university to study economics or business, but they may not find jobs afterward. This is contributing to the decline in learners pursuing commercial subjects.	64

	Additionally, many who become economists end up doing PGCE to qualify as teachers, but there are also limited teaching jobs available.”	
Principal 9	The root cause is that the government is not doing enough to improve the quality of education.	65
Question 2 Researcher	Did you inform the Department when phasing out commercial subject or was based on personal perspectives or reasons?	66
Principal 7	When students consider the future job projections for commercial subjects on the job market Learners are not doing very well especially in accounting	67
Principal 8	Before we contacted the circuits, we met with the SGB and the parents, showing them the difficulties, we are encountering in having many streams. We even showed them that there are few learners doing the commercial stream, so we can't take a risk, while many learners are enrolling for the general stream.	68
Principal 9	Yes, we have informed the department, and they have recommended that the commercial stream be phased out gradually, starting from grade 10 and then the following year, grade 11.	69
Question 3 Researcher	Did you involve SGB members when phasing out of commercial subject?	70
Principal 7	We met with them and showed them the possibility and impossibility of having many streams in the school while lacking human resources. They agreed, looking at the number of learners and teachers in the school. Conversely, we showed them that there is a workload. All in all, they say it's no good; thus, the school should have all the streams, but they probably say that due to a	71

	lack of information.	
Principal 8	Yes, we have involved the SGB members, and they called the parents of learners who are doing commercial subjects and reached an agreement to register learners who are doing commercial subjects in neighboring schools.	72
Principal 9	Yes, it was a decision of the SGB, to phase out commercial subject after consultation with them	73
Question 4 Researcher	What role did teachers' unions play in phasing out of commercial subject?	74
Principal 7	"They (teacher unions) insisted that this must not be phased out but because of the few numbers of learners they were not having a choice. According to school policy a class with less than 20 students is not allowed to proceed."	75
Principal 8	The branch was not informed, but we had a meeting with the teacher, where most of us are SADTU members, and we agreed to phase out commercial subjects because they have the workload.	76
Principal 9	Yes, we have discussed it with them and asked them to inform their various unions.	77
Question 5 Researcher	What was the perception of the teacher's commercial subject when their subject was phased out?	78
Principal 7	We had 1 educator for commercial subjects, which was a relief to her because she was supposed to teach all the commercial subjects.	79
Principal 8	They are disappointed because they must be transferred to other schools. So, there is a fear of the unknown, and they have decided that those in grade 10 should do Business studies with other subjects	80
Principal 9	The where very sad as they were fighting for this stream.	81
Question 6 Researcher	What do you think can be done to reinstate accounting as subject area and other commercial subject your school?	82

Principal 7	It is important to have high enrolment in the school because you will find that some learners in the community are doing commercial subjects in other schools where they are supposed to use transport. Thus, If the community can play a role by enrolling their learners in the school, we can reinstate commercial subjects.	83
Principal 8	Commercial subjects should be advertised in grade 9 so learners can find it attractive to do commercial subjects in grade 10	84
Principal 9	I think if department can hire at least 3 commercial subjects' teachers per school without looking at school post establishment and enrollment for commercial can assist.	85
Question 7 Researcher	What do you think is a root cause of phasing out of commercial subject at school?	86
Principal 7	Human resource because 1 educator offered a commercial subject.	87
Principal 8	Is a decrease in the number of learners choosing commercial subjects? This is because learners develop negative attitudes towards commercial subjects because of poor performance in Economics Management and Sciences (EMS), as teachers who are teaching grades 8 and 9 are not qualified to teach EMS.	88
Principal 9	Poor performance is a problem sir	89

VERBATIM INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

STILL OFFERING COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

Question 1 Researcher	Are you aware that commercial subjects are going to be phased out as a stream? Motivate	90
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Teacher 1	Yes, Learners are losing interest in commercial subjects. The students are not well informed on commercial subjects. They know a bit of knowledge of what they are taught which is not enough to encourage anyone to pursue commercial subjects."	91
Teacher 2	"yebo and because Many believe that only physical sciences or social sciences lead to successful careers and this belief discourages learners from taking commercial subjects"	92
Teacher 3	Informal so, because the principal was afraid of the accountability and they introduced tourism to replace business studies."	93
Question 2 Researcher	Where you consulted about the phasing out of the commercial subjects?	94
Teacher 1	When students consider the future job projections for commercial subjects on the job market Learners are not doing very well especially in accounting	95
Teacher 2	"no maybe because we don't have much numbers in grade 10 whether we can say we got 30 learners or 20 learners. The learners that are in grade mostly is less than 10	96
Teacher 3	Myself I wasn't consulted by anyone	97
Question 3 Researcher	what do you think are reasons for the school's intention of phasing out commercial subjects?	98
Teacher 1	The school management team (SMT) also contributes by focusing on subjects that yield high results, such as physical sciences, and sidelining commercial subjects, like accounting, which students often struggle with.	99
Teacher 2	"Learners are no longer interested in commercial subjects due to a lack of job opportunities after completing their studies."	100

Teacher 3	This is due to a lack of job opportunities in commercial subjects. For instance, those who pass grade 12 with commercial subjects end up studying Bcom in Accounting, and when they don't find a job, they do PGCE, and due to the decline in the number of learners who are doing commercial, they end up not getting a job even as a qualified teacher. Conversely, there is poor performance in EMS in grade 9."	101
Question 4 Researcher	What is your perception of the plans for phasing out commercial subjects?	102

Teacher 1	Department of education is failing us as country	103
Teacher 2	I personally see economic disaster in our country	104
Teacher 3	Principals are to be blamed in this disaster as they only focused on good result not future of the learners.	105
Question 5 Researcher	Are the learners encouraged to do commercial subjects when they come to FET level?	106
Teacher 1	"jaa...but...same learners used to say this to me, we did not choose commercial subjects because we love science and we felt that commercial subjects were more difficult, hence their thought that if they chose them, they wouldn't pass"	107
Teacher 2	"Learners are not encouraged to take commercial subjects by lacking the foundation for the subjects."	108
Teacher 3	Not real but teachers themselves who are offering EMS can do better. I'm not sure if, besides being chartered accountants, they are informed that they can also pursue a degree in economics, I don't know whether it involves mathematics because most learners say mathematics is difficult for them. So, the school principals should allow learners to choose commercial subjects with mathematical literacy	109
Question 6 Researcher	What do you think can be done to retain commercial subjects in your school?	110
Teacher 1	"If learners know the wide range of careers that follow commercial subject maybe they would opt for them"	111

Teacher 2	we could either break-down ems into segment namely maybe we can have accounting all trace opponent separately to our entrepreneurs and business studies	112
Teacher 3	we can even guide and inform parents out there because most parent believe that if their child chooses science and maths they will perform well. parents must know that even they choses other subjects they can do well in life so if we can guide them on that note I think will help also.	113
Question 7 Researcher	What is the stigma that you encounter within the school or in the community?	114

Teacher 1	Being given new subjects like life orientation and art and culture to teach just to secure work.	115
Teacher 2	The challenge of high cost of living by being moved to a place which is far away from my home whereby I'm going to rent the place or to travel every day spending a lot on petrol.	116
Teacher 3	Being moved around, even far from my residential place from one school to another. (being on R and R).	117
Question 8 Researcher	Do you think that you as an educator are doing your best in making learners to love or develop interest in commercial stream?	118
Teacher 1	yes, I was doing my best. I was even initiating commercial subject competition but the school never focus on us and they never funded us	119
Teacher 2	Yes, I do my level best. I conduct extra classes, even though there's no financial benefit attached. I also personally fund awards to motivate students who perform well or improve in these subjects. However, it's challenging when schools prioritize physical sciences with larger class sizes and neglect commercial subjects, which have fewer students."	120
Teacher 3	Yes, as a teacher am trying my level best because I even try to organizing educational trip for commercial learners, but our principal decline	121

PLANNING TO PHASE OUT COMMERCIAL

Question 1 Researcher	Do you still have the consistent number of learners as you had from 2018 to 2024?	122
Teacher 4	No, the number is declining, I think it's because the management that is our principle are not so much interested in the commercial subjects. The main focus is normally on physics and maths. And for that reason, they would simply phase out commercial subjects. They are more interested in results also."	123
Teacher 5	Yes, we do have a consistent number. We have 10-15 learners from grades 10 to 12; it depends on the years. The enrolment of the school is plus or minus 360, and 130 learners are in grade	124

	10, and only 10-15 learners are doing commercial subjects because most learners choose general subjects. This is because most teachers, especially those who are teaching language, tell learners not to choose commercial subjects due to a lack of job opportunities.	
Teacher 6	The number is decreasing every year because school management, which is our principal, is not so much interested in the commercial subjects. The main focus is normally on physics and maths. And for that reason, they would simply phase out commercial subjects. They are more interested in results also. Perhaps maybe because of the low performance, sometimes of learners. They just decided we are just simply going to phase out the commercial subjects."	125
Question 2 Researcher	What could be the reason for a decline/increase in the number of learners?	126
Teacher 4	When students consider the future job projections for commercial subjects on the job market Learners are not doing very well especially in accounting	127
Teacher 5	"The problem is the underperformance of the school and the learners have fear of choosing accounting and economics."	128

Teacher 6	"I think more especially, under commercial subjects, you're doing commercial subjects theoretically than practically. So, it simply means if you're doing something theoretically, not physically, there won't be much interest in that. Just imagine, more especially, we're teaching a lot of learners about a lot of money, businesses, but they cannot even own one. They are not even closer to businesses. That's why more especially, they lose interest, because they are not doing it physically."	129
Question 3 Researcher	What motivates you to continue offering commercial subjects amid all the challenges?	130
Teacher 4	"We have a lot of learners but they are not many because of the problem with the pass rate for this subject because some learners are not performing well while some are performing well	131

	but learners are not interested	
Teacher 5	The commercial subjects are the ones that lead the country because we can't live without them. Thus, we encourage learners to take them by telling them that when they choose this career, they can be economists, work in the bank, and help us because we know that the economy cannot operate without commercial subjects since we carry the economy, we have the finances and factors of production inside and all these things comes from commercial subjects.	132
Teacher 6	Commercial subjects are scarce skills subjects needed in the market. Thus, we believe learners that learners need to have this skill so that they can penetrate the market.	133
Question 4 Researcher	What kind of assistance would you need to continuously retain commercial subjects?	134
Teacher 4	The Department of Education should also make commercial subjects compulsory, so that even learners who pursue careers in science, law, or engineering have the business knowledge needed to manage their own careers or businesses."	135

Teacher 5	"I cannot point fingers exactly, but as a commercial subject teacher, I think should be the ones supposed to go and speak to the grade 9th, showing them the importance, however the SMT as the custodian of the whole curriculum at school, can also put affirmative action (AA) hand so that learners are encouraged to do the commercial subjects, because at the end of the day, it's not a good thing to be pleased by the results for easy subjects. Whereas learners are just passing without gaining the skills they need to succeed after leaving school"	136
Teacher 6	Having somebody from outside who can come to school to motivate grade 8 and 9 learners and have career guidance on commercial subjects. The department also needs to encourage learners to choose commercial subjects.	137
Question 5 Researcher	Do you as an educator have enough resources that help you to make commercial subjects' fun for learning?	138
Teacher 4	"I don't have enough teaching aids for commercial subjects,	139

	rather have knowledge of theory and traditional teaching."	
Teacher 5	When we talk of materials we don't have enough resources for the commercial subject lot of things they don't even focus on the commercial subjects some of the books we don't even have enough some of the resources that we need for example forms, handouts for those commercial subjects we tend to not have them because they do not concentrate on the commercial subjects	140
Teacher 6	No, I don't have enough resources.	141
Question 6 Researcher	Do you think educator have an influence learner choosing their streams? Motivate.	142
Teacher 4	"Throughout my teaching experience, I've observed that one of the main problems is parental influence not teachers, many parents want their children to pursue fields like engineering or the hard sciences, as they believe these are the fields where national recognition and TV awards come from. This has shifted the focus away from commercial subjects."	143

Teacher 5	"To a certain extent, I think educators have a part in influencing learners. If you are a teacher then you are a role model to the learners and have excellence the learners will be encouraged to follow the subject that you teach	144
Teacher 6	"There are many challenges. First, there is a lack of support from fellow teachers, who often promote science-related streams over commercial subjects. Principals also focus on physical sciences and do not provide the necessary support for commercial subjects."	145

PHASED OUT COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

Question 1 Researcher	Why did the school phase out commercial subject?	146
Teacher 7	The reason is that students were finding it difficult for the learners to do mathematics and accounting. Students started to drop the commercial subjects when the government introduced that there is no commercial combination without mathematics.	147
	So it was of no use to have 5 learners in a class so the teachers have no work to do, hence we decided to phase the subject."	
Teacher 8	"The principals of most schools don't care about the future of the learners and country."	148
Teacher 9	The subjects required at university for my career choice do not require commercial subjects. It was pressure from friends, at school, from parents."	149
Question 2 Researcher	As a commercial subject teacher, how did you feel when commercial subjects were phased out?	150
Teacher 7	When students consider the future job projections for commercial subjects on the job market Learners are not doing very well especially in accounting	151
Teacher 8	It's disheartening to see the subjects lose relevance despite all the methods we try to implement to keep learners interested."	152

Teacher 9	I feel so hurt, painful, embarrassed, disrespected, undermined, useless person.	153
Question 3 Researcher	What do you think can be done to reinstate commercial subjects in your school?	154
Teacher 7	After high school, I think SMT should get involved positively to keep this dream alive	155
Teacher 8	"I don't know as Many parents want their children to pursue fields like engineering or the hard sciences, as they believe these are the fields where national recognition and TV awards come from. This has shifted the focus away from commercial subjects."	156
Teacher 9	There is a circular that is talking about the number of educators and the streams that is why maybe educators are not interested because if small learners or less learners are not taking it which means the educators are not giving learners much about this subject they have no information about this subject	157
Question 4	What do you think should have been done to prevent	158

Researcher	phasing out of commercial subjects?	
Teacher 7	I think learners need to be addressed and be advised about the good things or benefits of being doing or taking commerce subjects	168
Teacher 8	The departmental heads (DH), principals, parents and teachers should have joined hands together by addressing such issues because the phasing of commerce subjects mean that even teachers are being affected by this situation.	169
Teacher 9	One thing to prevent this situation is through allowing commerce student to replace mathematics by mathematical literacy (ML) as if learners are afraid of maths as they don't pass it.	170

Question 5 Researcher	Do you think that you as educator are doing your best in making learners to love or develop interest in commercial stream?	180
Teacher 7	Yes, however, the school principals discourage the learners from taking commercial subjects because they think that there are no job opportunities other than being a chartered accountant but there are so many career choices that they can make if they are encouraged by both SMT and the teachers concerned."	190
Teacher 8	I can say yes but is not enough, looking at the number of learners who are taking commerce	191
Teacher 9	"I was recruiting learners and ask the support to principal, and she is not interested	193
Question 7 Researcher	Do you as an educator have enough resources that help you to make commercial subjects' fun for learners?	194
Teacher 7	No...no enough resources to make commerce subjects entertain even if you can make a request to the school to buy the things that can help both learner and teachers in commerce, the school is not ready to finance such things.	195
Teacher 8	no, we do not have enough and when we look at our school they never had a budget for commercial subjects' resources but they	196
	always have for science and math technology	
Teacher 9	When we talk of material we don't have resources for the commercial subjects they don't even focus on commercial subjects because we don't even have enough books. Some of the resource that we will need e.g. forms and hard out for commercial subjects we turn not to have them because they don't on commercial subjects	197
Question 8 Researcher	What is the stigma that you encounter within the school or in the community?	198

Teacher 7	Is like what you have learnt about in under commerce, i.e., my degree, diploma, honors, etc is less important.	199
Teacher 8	I think everyone look at me as a useless teacher to a point where they even call us names like MR C. A	200
Teacher 9	We are called mobile teachers, because we are always on R and R every year	201

VERBATIM INFORMATION FOR LEARNERS FOCUSED GROUP

LEARNERS DOING COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

Question 1 Researcher		Were you encouraged by someone to choose commercial subjects? If not, what made you to choose them?	202
Learner Group1	Focus	Yes, I was encouraged by my cousin because in our family, she's the only one who has studied commercial subjects, and now she is a qualified accountant who earns a lot of money. So, I wanted to be just like her.	203
		I wasn't encouraged by anyone to choose commercial subjects, I choose commercial subjects because they offer practical skills and knowledge that can be directly applied in the business world.	204
Learner Group2	Focus	Yes, I was encouraged by my sister because of the way she performs well in accounting.	205

		I was not encouraged by anyone. I love commercial subjects. I remember when I was still in grade 7, there was a career day, and I told my teacher and classmates that I wanted to be a businessman.	206
Learner Group3	Focus	Yes, I was encouraged by my friends who also do commercial subjects.	207
		My brother, who was also doing well in commercial subjects, encouraged me, so I thought I wouldn't do either in the science and History stream.	208
Question 2 Researcher		Is there a particular subject in the stream that you find challenging? If yes, which one?	209
Learner Group1	Focus	When students consider the future job projections for commercial subjects on the job market Learners are not doing very well especially in accounting	210
Learner Group2	Focus	With me it is accounting because I perform well in other subjects, with accounting I'm an average because I am not good with numbers, numbers require me to stretch my mind too much and I do not like it.	211
Learner Group 3	Focus	Economics, because I find it challenging because in exam typical questions you can find that there are more general questions that are based on what is happening currently in the economy and it is difficult for me as a learner to answer that kind of question especially nowadays where most of us, we are not familiar with these kinds of things.	212

Question 3 Researcher		What do you think could be done to help you to better understand the difficult subject within commercial stream?	213
Learner Group 1	Focus	In accounting I think it would be better to have extra classes maybe on Saturday and Sunday.	214
Learner Group 1	Focus	In Accounting, accounting. I think it would be better if we increased the time because it has a lot of chapters.	215
Learner Group 2	Focus	Myself I think the department of education should hire young educators who are coming straight from the universities as they have new skills and are able to share with us as learners because most of commercial subjects are taught by teachers that are about to retire and they have old information.	216
Learner Group 2	Focus	They must maintain and even enhance the teaching standards of commercial subjects in schools integrating worldwide application and impact activities can be highly affective.	217
Learner Group 3	Focus	think the school must make sure that the teachers are more passionate about the subjects and have adequate resources such as textbooks.	218
Learner Group3	Focus	In accounting, I think we need to have a teacher who can make us understand better.	219
Question 4 Researcher		Is the support you receive towards learning as a commercial subject's learner enough?	220
Learner Group 1	Focus	It is enough especially with the studies at school, the extra classes we receive from the school they really help especially with thing that we do not understand during the actual lessons, so the school its helpful with the extra classes that they provide for us.	221

Learner Group 1	Focus	With me I think the school support its helpful because most of our teachers they put more efforts even though they saw that we are struggling especially with the numbers because are more difficult.	222
Learner Group 2	Focus	Business studies. This is because I think it's a waste of time and effort as we learn about opening a business.	223
Learner Group 2	Focus	No, we don't receive enough support. This is because other streams like science stream have science day whereas we who are doing commercial subjects don't have accounting day	224
Learner Group 3	Focus	We don't receive any support. This is because we asked for a trip to the reserve bank but didn't receive any communication today.	225
Learner Group 3	Focus	Conversely, I don't receive any support. I think they may have to use a home language in accounting.	226
Question 5 Researcher		Do you think that there are uncertainties with your career as a learner doing commercial subjects?	227
Learner Group 1	Focus	Well with me I think there is, just that we don't have enough information about it, but when you speak to the right people you can see that there's a future.	228
Learner Group 2	Focus	Myself I think there is a certainty but we as learners we are just having a bad mentality that if a person did commercial subjects, he/she is going to be jobless or end up doing something that they did not study for	229
Learner Group 3	Focus	For me I think commercial subjects have certainties' and as leaners we are just lied by our peers and how	230
		we believe that commercial subjects limit our careers	

Question 6		Is there any support or orientation that you as a learner receive prior choosing your streams?	231
Learner Group 1	Focus	Myself I think there is a certainty but we as learners we are just having a bad mentality that if a person did commercial subjects, he/she is going to be jobless or end up doing something that they did not study for.	232
Learner Group 2	Focus	Well with me I think there is, just that we don't have enough information about it, but when you speak to the right people you can see that there's a future	233
Learner Group 3	Focus	For me there is a certainty since you can get a job before and after completing your degree and it has many opportunities you can consider.	234
Learner Group 3	Focus	For me I think commercial subjects have certainties' and as learners we are just lied by our peers and how we believe that commercial subjects limit our careers.	235
Question 7		Do you feel motivated or discouraged to take commercial subjects?	236
Learner Group 1	Focus	With me I feel encouraged because the people around me motivate me a lot also the company that I wish to work for it gives me hope that it is possible to succeed in the commercial subjects.	237
Learner Group 2	Focus	For I do not feel discouraged even though I was not motivated in the beginning and not really interested in commercial subjects, but now that I am doing them, I'm passionate.	238

Learner Group 3	Focus	For me I feel encouraged because I always wanted to be entrepreneur and right now, I am learning more about entrepreneurship as I did commercial subjects.	239
Question 8		Are you having any role 1 models' people who enrolled commercial subjects and become successful?	240
Learner Group 1	Focus	Yes, I have, he is working in one of the biggest companies is SA	241
Learner Group 2	Focus	Yes, I do, a family member who owns a company	244
Learner Group 3	Focus	No one now.	245

LEARNERS NOT DOING COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS

Question 1 Researcher		Did you consider commercial subjects when choosing subjects in FET?	246
Learner Group4	Focus	We never considered doing commercial subjects	247
Learner Group5	Focus	We never think of doing commercial subjects	248
Learner Group6	Focus	It didn't come to our thoughts that we must do commercial subjects	249

Question 2 Researcher	What made you to not choose commercial subjects when choosing FET subjects	250
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Learner Group4	Focus	it did not have enough job security, considering the advancement of technology in life	251
Learner Group4	Focus	There are limited career opportunities available in the commercial sector.	252
Learner Group 5	Focus	The career that I choose didn't require commerce so I thought it will just waste of my studying time	253
Learner Group 5	Focus	many jobs need science studies more than commercial ones.	254
Learner Group 6	Focus	Pursuing commercial subjects has never been a consideration for me because they lack creative expression.	255
Learner Group 6	Focus	I preferred hands-on technical subjects	256
		This is because some educators influence learners not to choose commercial subjects due to a lack of job opportunities, jealousy, and favoring their subjects. So, most learners came to me and told me that they were told not to choose commercial subjects.	257
Question 3 Researcher		Do you think commercial subject are relevant in today's world?	257
Learner Group 4	Focus	Yes. This is because theirs is a limited job in the commercial stream.	258
Learner Group 5	Focus	No. This is because there's a lot of lack of chartered accountants in the country, and one is one of them.	259

Learner Group 6	Focus	No. This is because few learners are doing commercial and as a result it makes it easy to find jobs.	260
Question 4		Which subjects among the commercial	261

Researcher		subjects discourage you as learners from enrolling in the commercial stream.	
Learner Group 4	Focus	In accounting, I think we need to have a teacher who can make us understand better.	262
Learner Group 5	Focus	In economics, I think we need to have materials that can help us understand things better.	263
		Business studies. this because I thinking is waste of time and effort as we learned about opening a business-like experiment	264
Learner Group 6	Focus	In accounting and economics, I think it would be better if we had extra classes where a different teacher would teach us.	265
Question 5 Researcher		Is there any support or orientation that you as a learner receive prior choosing your stream?	266
Learner Group 1	Focus	No, we don't receive enough support. This is because other streams like science stream have science day whereas we who are doing commercial subjects don't have accounting day	267
myLearner Group 2	Focus	We don't receive any support. This is because we asked for a trip to the reserve bank but didn't receive any communication today. Conversely, I don't receive any support.	268

Learner Group 3	Focus	I do receive support, although I stay with my grandparents, but we don't receive any support from the school.	269
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Appendix N Language editing certificate

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