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## Abstract

### Keywords:

Economic and Management Sciences, Financial Literacy, rural education, teacher challenges

The study investigated the challenges faced by teachers and learners in the teaching and learning of Financial Literacy within the Grade 7–9 Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) curriculum in South African schools. Introduced under the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), EMS aims to equip learners with financial management skills and prepare them for Accounting from Grade 10. Despite this, learner performance in Financial Literacy remains poor, primarily due to overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching time, and difficulties with subject-specific terminology. Guided by a constructivist paradigm, the study adopted a phenomenology design and qualitative approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with sixteen participants, including EMS teachers, heads of department, and a curriculum advisor from seven rural schools in Limpopo's Capricorn South District. Thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews identified five key challenges: limited teacher knowledge of Financial Literacy, large class sizes, insufficient teaching time, complex terminology, and restricted access to technological resources. These factors impede learner engagement and understanding, leading to low performance and reduced interest in commercial subjects. Teachers with minimal Accounting backgrounds struggle to explain abstract concepts, while overcrowded classrooms limit differentiated instruction and learner support. Inadequate access to technology further constrains interactive and engaging learning experiences. The study concludes that effective teaching of Financial Literacy requires enhanced teacher training, increased teaching time, smaller class sizes, and improved technological support. Addressing these challenges can strengthen instructional practices, improve learner outcomes, and foster greater financial competence, thereby advancing the broader objectives of the EMS curriculum.

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the persistent difficulties encountered in teaching and learning Financial Literacy within the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) curriculum. Although Financial Literacy constitutes a crucial aspect of EMS, both teachers and learners continue to experience notable difficulties in delivering and grasping this component effectively. Teachers are responsible for equipping learners with the skills to understand how individuals and communities can make efficient use of scarce resources to fulfil their needs and wants - an essential purpose of EMS. As outlined by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011), EMS focuses on the responsible and effective management of resources to meet human requirements and aspirations. The curriculum comprises three key: Financial Literacy, The Economy, and Entrepreneurship. The Financial Literacy strand covers areas such as saving, budgeting, income and expenditure, accounting fundamentals, the accounting process, source documents, financial administration, and record-keeping (DBE, 2011).

Studies conducted by Jonda and Modise (2022) indicate that both teachers and learners face notable difficulties in the EMS teaching and learning process, with Financial Literacy being particularly challenging. The complex nature of Financial Literacy content is a major factor contributing to poor learner outcomes in the subject (Sentsho & Mudau, 2023). Learners frequently struggle to process and make sense of transactions, understand accounting concepts, and apply related knowledge (Siyaya et al., 2021), which often results in low achievement and diminishing interest in the subject. It is suggested that EMS teachers, during their undergraduate studies, typically had to choose only two majors from Economics, Business Studies, and Accounting (Jonda & Modise, 2022). This practice often leaves them with insufficient content knowledge and pedagogical skills for at least one of the three EMS components. Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore the obstacles faced in teaching and learning Financial Literacy to inform the development of interventions that could support both teachers and learners.



Teacher training programmes are generally intended to provide prospective teachers with an understanding of both subject content and effective pedagogical approaches (Taylor, 2019). This preparation is considered the stage during which teachers develop their instructional methods alongside their mastery of subject matter. Phillips and Condy (2023) emphasise that teacher education is designed not only to impart general teaching skills but also to prepare teachers to teach specific subject content competently. A teacher's understanding of the content significantly influences their preferences in lesson design and teaching strategies. This underlines the necessity for the educational system to strengthen teacher training, ensuring that teachers develop a thorough grasp of subject matter and effective instructional techniques to improve both teaching quality and learner outcomes in specific subjects (Rif'attullah & Ciptaningrum, 2024). Lack of comprehensive knowledge of a subject's structure can lead to the misrepresentation of both content and the intended learning outcomes. Often, EMS teachers are not Accounting specialists and are required to teach complex accounting topics with limited expertise, potentially generating misconceptions among learners (Agumba & Dasoo, 2024).

The efficacy of lessons in EMS also heavily depends on the allocation of sufficient time and the inclusion of appropriate teaching and learning resources (Nzuza et al., 2022). Given that EMS covers three interconnected domains, the time dedicated to the subject should allow adequate attention to each area. Current policy allocates only two hours per week to EMS - one hour for Financial Literacy and one hour for Entrepreneurship and The Economy - compared with five hours for Home Language, four and a half hours for Mathematics, and three hours for Natural Science (DBE, 2011). One hour per week for Financial Literacy is widely considered inadequate, given the subject's extensive content and multiple chapters. Research by Ndlovu (2022) indicates that insufficient time allocation negatively affects the quality of education, as teachers often prioritise finishing the syllabus instead of delivering fully developed lessons.

Language of instruction presents another major barrier. The Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997) prescribes that learners receive instruction in their home language during Grades R-3 and are introduced to English as a second language. As from Grade 4, English typically becomes the language of instruction. However, many African language-speaking learners struggle with this

transition, as only a small proportion, approximately 7%, speak English at home. Consequently, English is used as the primary language for EMS and other subjects in most schools. This often impedes effective learning, particularly in the analysis and interpretation of Financial Literacy transactions. Siyaya et al. (2022) contend that learners' underperformance in EMS can be largely attributed to insufficient English language proficiency, including a limited understanding of subject-specific terminology. As learners demonstrate varying levels of English proficiency, from basic to advanced; their ability to grasp concepts, think critically, and communicate effectively directly influences their success in EMS (Siyaya, 2019). The specialised language of Financial Literacy further complicates comprehension. Learners frequently find the terminology unfamiliar and challenging to master. Phakathi (2018) highlights that learners often struggle to understand and internalise unique Financial Literacy concepts, making the acquisition of new knowledge difficult. These challenges are compounded when instruction is delivered in a second language, intensifying difficulties in understanding and applying subject content.

The transition from the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in 2012 introduced additional teaching challenges, as curriculum content was revised without corresponding guidance on effective pedagogical strategies (Letshwene & du Plessis, 2021). Teachers are observed to have substantial potential to deliver EMS content, yet many face difficulties covering the full curriculum, particularly Financial Literacy, and express concerns about the complexity and breadth of content for Grades 8 and 9 (Mabusela, 2018). Weekly teaching requirements for Financial Literacy necessitate that teachers possess adequate knowledge of pedagogical strategies for Accounting. Molise (2021) notes that teachers' limited involvement in curriculum design can contribute to resistance to change, further complicating effective instruction.

Resource availability remains a significant obstacle for EMS teaching and learning. A lack of textbooks and other necessary educational resources compels teachers to depend on photocopied materials, which are often easily misplaced by learners prior to examinations (Fakude, 2022). Many schools prioritise textbook allocation for the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grade 10-12) at the expense of the Senior Phase (Grade 7-9) (Mabusela, 2018), leaving teachers to rely on chalkboard notes and

explanations during subsequent sessions due to scheduling constraints. Adequate access to textbooks covering key topics such as the general ledger, accounting equation, and cash/credit journals is crucial for effective learning.

Classroom overcrowding presents another critical challenge. Numerous public schools in South Africa experience classes exceeding the recommended teacher-learner ratio of 1:30 (West & Meier, 2020). In EMS, large classes hinder teachers' ability to achieve lesson objectives, reduce opportunities for individual attention, and affect teacher motivation, particularly when learners' abilities and backgrounds are diverse. Overcrowded classrooms restrict the time teachers can spend with individual learners and impede effective monitoring of activities (Molise, 2021). Noise levels can increase, requiring clear classroom management rules, yet overcrowding still obstructs teaching and learning. Classrooms remain central to intellectual and personal development, providing opportunities for interaction, skill acquisition, and the realisation of learners' potential (Tshangana, et al., 2023).

## 2. Theoretical foundation

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Cognitive Load Theory. This theory examines how the mental effort required by learners influences their capacity to process information and acquire knowledge, recognising that human memory has a limited storage capacity (Sweller, 2022). Cognitive Load Theory is particularly relevant to this research, as teaching Financial Literacy often involves complex concepts and calculations, such as general ledger accounts, which can place a significant cognitive burden on learners. By applying this theory, it becomes evident that learners may encounter difficulties in Financial Literacy when instructional methods impose excessive demands on their working memory, thereby hindering their understanding of intricate concepts.

## 3. Research methodology

### 3.1 Research Paradigm

This study was guided by a constructivist paradigm, which is suitable as it recognises that reality is not singular but constructed through individual experiences. Understanding the challenges involved in teaching and learning Financial Literacy required gathering and interpreting participants' perspectives to address the research questions. According to Kekeya (2019), the constructivist paradigm posits that people build their personal understanding and awareness of

their environment through lived experiences and thoughtful consideration.

### 3.2 Research Design and Approach

As noted by Creswell and Creswell (2018), a research design is a fundamental element of any study, providing a structured plan for addressing research questions. It outlines the methods, participants, timing, and conditions under which data are collected. Given the difficulties encountered by teachers and learners in delivering and understanding Financial Literacy, this study adopted a phenomenological design and qualitative approach to gather data from participants, concentrating on these challenges within the EMS curriculum. In phenomenological research, the researcher sets aside personal assumptions and concentrates on understanding the participants' lived experiences (James & Bray, 2022). Qualitative research seeks to explore and understand concepts, opinions, and experiences in real-life contexts (Bhandari, 2024).

### 3.3 Participants

In this study, the population consisted of teachers and Departmental Heads from rural schools within the Sekhukhune South district of Limpopo Province. These individuals are most affected by challenges in the teaching and learning of Financial Literacy in Grades 8 and 9. A purposive sampling method was employed, selecting participants capable of providing rich, detailed information about the phenomenon (Makwana et al., 2023). Seven rural secondary schools in the Capricorn South District, Limpopo province, South Africa were selected. The sample comprised 16 participants, namely ten EMS teachers, five Departmental heads, and one curriculum advisor. Departmental heads oversee the departments to which teachers belong, while the curriculum advisor, based at the district offices, provides support to teachers within a specific subject. Given their educational experience, particularly in EMS Financial Literacy, their responses were expected to yield valuable information to address the research problem.

### 3.4 Data Collection Instruments

The choice of data collection instruments is essential for obtaining information that effectively addresses the research questions (Taherdoost, 2021). This study utilised semi-structured interviews to collect primary data. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to provide open-ended responses, sharing opinions, experiences, and insights. Husband (2020) notes that such interviews can capture teachers'

perspectives on their actual classroom contexts. Before conducting the main study, two EMS teachers and one Departmental Head, who were not part of the research sample, reviewed the interview guide to assess its clarity, leading to a few minor adjustments. The interviews, conducted at the participants' schools after teaching hours to avoid disruption, lasted approximately 20 minutes each, were audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed. Departmental Heads provided insights regarding academic management challenges, complementing teachers' classroom perspectives.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves examining collected information in ways that allow meaningful interpretation and understanding (Aguas, 2022). This study employed thematic analysis, which identifies and interprets patterns and recurring ideas within qualitative data (Flick, 2021). The recordings were listened to and the interview data transcribed, with similar statements grouped together to identify relevant categories. After reviewing participants' responses, ideas were categorised according to the main research question. The analysis entailed reviewing individual words and sentences to identify recurring themes and meanings. The descriptions were read multiple times to interpret the findings in connection with the challenges experienced in teaching and learning Financial Literacy within the EMS curriculum, and the themes were subsequently drawn from the transcriptions.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

The university Human Research Ethics Committee [CUT/REIC/20205/000587] and the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee granted ethical approval for the study. Permission was also sought from and granted by the Department of Basic Education in Limpopo province to conduct research in the selected schools. The study adhered to principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, minimisation of harm, and responsible communication of findings.

## 4. Findings

Findings are discussed by means of themes derived from the data collected. Participants were given pseudonyms to guard their identity. Teachers were coded as T (from TA to TJ, representing Teacher A to Teacher J), Departmental heads as DH (from DHA to DHE, representing Departmental head A to Departmental head E), and the Curriculum Advisor as

CA. The schools were numbered from School 1 to School 7. Accordingly, participants were coded as follows: School 1-TA, TB, and DHA; School 2-TC; School 3-TD, TE, and DHB; School 4-TF; School 5-TG, TH, and DHC; School 6-TI and DHD; School 7-TJ and DHE; and CA.

### *Theme 1: Inadequate Financial Literacy Knowledge among Teachers*

One of the challenges identified as hindering the teaching of Financial Literacy was the prioritisation of the FET phase, where teachers specialising in Accounting are assigned to teach Grades 10 to 12, particularly Grade 12, while Grades 8 and 9 are often neglected. A participant noted that, although teachers with limited knowledge of Financial Literacy receive support through workshops and training, subsequent changes in teacher allocation by principals in the following year reduce the effectiveness of this training. The Curriculum Advisor (CA) highlighted that: *"Schools change teacher and subject allocation every year leading to the teacher development and training not being effective, considering the amount of content in Financial Literacy which requires recurring training"*.

Additionally, participants highlighted that insufficient subject knowledge among teachers poses a significant challenge, particularly in Financial Literacy. Many noted that teachers assigned to teach EMS often lack a strong understanding of Accounting, which results in a disproportionate focus on other areas of the curriculum while Financial Literacy is neglected. School 5: DHC: *"The majority of the teachers assigned to teach EMS mainly focus on their strong points that are Business and Economics related"*.

Another participant noted that teachers' limited understanding of Financial Literacy results in diminished enthusiasm for the subject, consequently leading to learners' weak achievement. School 3: DHB said: *"There are teachers who did not major in Accounting and lack knowledge of the Financial Literacy session which affects learners' performance, because they lose interest"*. This was corroborated by a participant from School 3: TE, who admitted to struggling with complex Financial Literacy concepts. She said: *"I come across challenges with understanding complex Financial Literacy terminologies"*. She noted that even teachers who had majored in Accounting often struggle to understand and explain certain terminologies. In contrast, another participant stated that he can teach Financial Literacy

effectively, as he is confident with numbers, despite not having specialised in Accounting. School 3: TD: *“Accounting is not my specialisation, but I am able to teach the Financial Literacy since I am good with numbers”*.

Departmental heads who participated in this study indicated that some teachers in their departments lack adequate grounding in the wider Accounting concepts necessary for the effective teaching of Financial Literacy. Additionally, some teachers isolate certain topics within Financial Literacy, while others omit the component entirely, preferring instead to focus on EMS areas in which they feel more confident.

### *Theme 2: Excessive Class Size*

Most participants indicated that overcrowded classrooms present a major obstacle to the successful teaching and learning of Financial Literacy. One participant from School 2: TC shared that: *“I can’t use different methods in classroom that is overcrowded. I am forced to teach all the topics using the same strategy, making it difficult to achieve the good results”*. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is compromised. In contrast, another participant raised concerns about how overcrowding affects learners’ comprehension of Financial Literacy, emphasising that a standard class size should be considered. School 5: TG: *“My classroom contains more than the normal class size number. The Department of Basic Education must follow the normal ratio for effective teaching and learning to take place”*. Also, another participant explained how disruptive and unruly learners become in an overcrowded classroom. School 5: TH: *“Learners become playful and disruptive, they even fight and lose focus. I am not always able to assist struggling learners”*. Sharing the same sentiment, another participant commented on how it becomes difficult to assist learners who can possibly need special attention. School 3: TE: *“It becomes difficult to give all the learners attention, especially the struggling ones”*.

A participant from School 1 stated that, despite the challenges of overcrowded classrooms, one-on-one sessions are not offered because he is the sole teacher for Grade 9. Consequently, learners are restricted to learning within the overcrowded classroom setting. School 1: TB: *“All my classes are overcrowded. Class size ranges between 65 to 75, and I do not do one on one sessions since I am teaching grade 9 alone”*. Another participant noted that it is difficult to move between desks to provide learners with the individual support they need during activities. Other participants

emphasised that, regardless of having excess class sizes, time also plays a part in hindering effective teaching and learning. School 1: TA said: *“Teaching Financial Literacy in an overcrowded classroom is the main problem, followed by not having enough time to access the learners, give feedback, and support the ones that struggle most”*. However, another participant asserted that overcrowding does not hinder classroom teaching and learning, provided the learners are disciplined. School 3: TD: *“I have never struggled to teach with too many learners in my class, since I can manage the classroom with a few or many learners”*.

In this study, most schools reported overcrowded classrooms, which affect how teachers deliver lessons, potentially limiting the use of preferred teaching methods such as class discussions or direct instruction. Teachers must employ high levels of classroom management and adapt their strategies to suit the environment, which may conflict with their professional development or preferred teaching approaches. Consequently, teaching objectives may not be met in overcrowded classrooms, as teachers are constrained in methods compatible with the school’s environment rather than those best suited to the learners’ needs.

### *Theme 3: Time Constraints*

Participants were questioned regarding how time allocation affects the delivery and acquisition of EMS. Some participants emphasised that EMS encompasses three subjects, which are divided into two papers, and therefore, the time allocated should reflect the breadth of the content. School 6: DHD stated: *“EMS consists of paper one and two. The allocation needs to be adjusted to three hours to match the workload”*. Although a participant from School 5 shares the same sentiment, it was added that the other content subjects are allocated more time. School 5: TH stated: *“Financial Literacy needs more time allocation, like it is with the other subjects, like Natural Sciences and Social Sciences”*. Furthermore, some participants suggested that sufficient time should be provided to allow learners to scrutinise, make sense of, and record transactions, rather than merely adhering to the allocated time to complete the syllabus as prescribed in the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). School 1: TB: *“The allocated time denies learners to effectively interpret all the transactions with classwork, and then they finish late while some never finish”*.

In addition, several participants reported that a considerable amount of time is spent breaking down

difficult concepts and transactions, which prevents teaching objectives from being fully achieved. This also limits the time available for learners to revise adequately before examinations. School 1: TA: *“We do not have sufficient time to go through all the contents while interpreting complex transactions”*. In agreement, School 1: DHA emphasised on the significance of revision and alluded on the increase of the allocated time. He said: *“The quantity of periods should be increased to 8 per week to enable teachers to finish the syllabus”*. The participant from School 7: DHE emphasised that Financial Literacy should be allocated more time, drawing a comparison with Mathematical Literacy, and stated that: *“In Mathematical Literacy, there is a topic of Financial Literacy which learners find challenging, when they don’t understand Financial Literacy in EMS, they also struggle in Mathematical Literacy. More time is needed.”*

A participant from School 5: DHC expressed the view that the only way to help learners catch up was by providing extra classes. He stated that: *“When a task has too many transactions, they cannot all be completed in one period. I create extra lessons to meet cover the remaining transactions”*. He further stressed that the design of the timetable does not allow continuous teaching and learning of Financial Literacy, *“The way my timetable is designed, one period is on Tuesday while the other is on Friday”*. In contrast, some participants noted that even though EMS is allocated three hours per week in their schools, this is still insufficient to teach effectively in an overcrowded classroom. School 2: TC said that: *“We have only two hours per week with over 70 learners in a classroom. This limits the number of assessments that can be given to learners. I struggle.”*

The DBE mandates two hours per week for EMS, split between Financial Literacy and The Economy and Entrepreneurship (DBE, 2011). Consequently, teachers must adhere to this time allocation, even when it is insufficient. Teachers with limited knowledge in Financial Literacy or who are not fully trained for the curriculum face additional challenges in delivering the content effectively within one hour per week, potentially hindering learners’ development of essential Financial Literacy skills.

#### *Theme 4: Difficult Terminologies and Concepts in Financial Literacy*

Participants highlighted challenges arising from the complex terminologies in the Financial Literacy component of EMS. Many participants reported

similar difficulties, particularly with terms, concepts, and topics such as the Accounting equation. Learners often struggle to interpret transactions, especially when determining whether assets, owners’ equity, or liabilities are increasing (+) or decreasing (-). School 2: TC said that: *“Learners often confuse the debiting and crediting in the Accounting Equation”*. Likewise, a participant from School 5: TH reported a similar experience, noting that learners not only struggle with interpreting and recording transactions but also face difficulties when transferring these transactions into the General Ledger, *“Usually learners who often get the transactions right, they fail to record the transactions in General Ledger.”*

Another challenge identified was the complexity of Financial Literacy concepts and terminologies, which contributes to a decline in learners’ interest in EMS. School 6: TI said that: *“Learners lack interest to learn Financial Literacy because it is very difficult for them”*. Participants further highlighted that the complexity of Financial Literacy concepts and terminologies also impacts teachers’ ability to effectively deliver the content, regardless of their experience or qualifications. School 4: TF: *“Teachers find it challenging to deliver the Financial Literacy content even when they majored in Accounting”*.

In Financial Literacy, learners are expected to grasp key principles, memorise specific accounting concepts, and follow the six steps of the Accounting Cycle when recording transactions and performing calculations. The demanding nature of these processes can be overwhelming, making it challenging for learners to recall and apply the required steps accurately.

#### *Theme 5: Access to technology in the teaching and learning of Financial Literacy*

When questioned about the accessibility of technological tools for teaching Financial Literacy, participants indicated that the existing resources are inadequate to fully support learners. School 2: TC: *“Our school does not have enough technological resources to support the teacher and learners of Financial Literacy, including overhead projectors”*. Since the Capricorn South District schools that were sampled are located in rural areas, some participants stressed that learners do not have devices to support their learning, while others complained about not being able to afford the data bundles. School 3: TD said that: *“Our learners in the rural areas don’t have smartphones to help them in the learning of Financial Literacy. Even those who have the phones, do not*

*always have data bundles*". The participant from School 3 mentioned that technological resources are available; however, those resources are not used in the teaching of Financial Literacy. School 3:TE: *"Our school has overhead projectors that are only used in other subjects. It seems that in this case, some subjects are more important than others"*. Notably, the availability of overhead projectors does not guarantee that teachers will utilise them in their classrooms because of time limitations in EMS. School 1: TB: *"The time allocated for Financial Literacy does not allow us to use the overhead projectors much"*.

In addition to the lack of mobile devices, learners who do have devices cannot afford the data bundles needed to support their learning. As a result, learning is limited to the classroom. School 3: TD: *"We do not have social media groups for learners because they complain about not having data bundles or airtime"*. Despite the absence of overhead projectors, computers, and social media-based learning, participants emphasised the importance of these resources in supporting the teaching and learning of Financial Literacy. School 4: TF: *"Technology is a great tool to use to enhance Financial Literacy because it helps learners to learn to be active in the classroom"*.

Teachers in this study reported that they are not provided with technological resources such as overhead projectors and smartboards, and that the procurement of these resources is not included in school budgets. Consequently, it becomes the requirement of the Department of Basic Education to allocate sufficient funds for acquiring technological sources essential for teaching Financial Literacy. In the absence of such resources, teachers remain unskilled in utilising Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning. Additionally, inadequate funding for EMS may contribute to shortages of other critical teaching and learning materials.

## 5. Discussions

Poor learner performance in EMS is partly due to teachers' limited content knowledge in Financial Literacy. EMS is often assigned to teachers who did not specialise in Accounting, one of the most critical components of the curriculum. Furthermore, teachers who do specialise in Accounting are typically allocated to teach Grade 12, leaving Grades 8 and 9 with teachers who are potentially underqualified in terms of the needed specialisation. This observation aligns with Fakude (2021), who found that many EMS

teachers struggle with topics such as the general ledger and accounting equation within Financial Literacy, particularly in the lower grades. It was also noted that EMS teachers tend to focus on areas in which they feel confident, such as The Economy and Entrepreneurship, while Financial Literacy, where they feel less secure, is largely neglected. This is supported by Nkabinde (2021), who observed that teachers often isolate the teaching of Financial Literacy. Importantly, the study revealed that even teachers specialised in Accounting encounter difficulties in explaining complex concepts to learners.

A conducive classroom environment cannot be achieved when classrooms are overcrowded. This negatively impacts on learner performance and can result in poor academic outcomes in EMS, particularly in Financial Literacy, which is practical in nature and requires learners' focused attention. When teachers are unable to move between desks to support learners during assessments and ensure that each learner is engaged, learners tend to become relaxed, playful, and noisy. This is reinforced by Tshangana et al (2023), who emphasise that teachers aim to interact effectively with each learner, manage classroom activities, and provide opportunities for skill development and potential to be realised, all of which require a high level of classroom management. Financial Literacy lessons demand a conducive classroom with a manageable class size to be delivered successfully. Overcrowded classrooms hinder the teaching and learning process, whereas normal class sizes make it possible to achieve teaching and learning objectives. Köhler (2020) confirms that class size affects learner performance, with smaller classes leading to better outcomes.

Overcrowded classrooms create a negative learning environment. Marais (2016) states that teaching under such conditions presents considerable challenges in creating positive learning environments in which appropriate teaching and assessment approaches are crucial. Participants expressed concerns about class sizes of 65 to 75 learners, suggesting that a normal class ratio is necessary to achieve desirable results. This view aligns with West and Meier (2020), who argue that educational goals are difficult to attain if class sizes are not considered. Additionally, overcrowded classrooms tend to be noisy and disruptive, requiring strong classroom management skills. Molise (2021) further notes that teachers need to establish rules to control noise levels in such settings.

In terms of time allocation, EMS is allocated only two hours per week, as prescribed in the CAPS document. According to DBE (2011), these two hours are divided equally, with one hour for Financial Literacy and another for Entrepreneurship and The Economy. Participants proposed that the Department of Basic Education must consider that EMS comprises three subjects and that each subject should be adequately accounted for when allocating time. They further emphasised that Financial Literacy should receive additional time due to its complexity. These observations align with Fakude (2021), who notes that the extensive Financial Literacy content requires substantial time to ensure continuity in teaching and to prevent disruptions caused by limited time. Teachers also expressed dissatisfaction with school timetables, which do not support continuous teaching of EMS, a concern echoed by Phakathi (2018), who highlighted that teachers struggle with the allocated two hours per week.

The limited time allocation for EMS, combined with the extensive curriculum content, prevents them from completing the syllabus or conducting adequate revision before examinations. Covering all CAPS-specified topics within the allotted time poses a significant challenge (Nzuza et al., 2022), potentially affecting learner performance. Ndlovu (2022) asserts that insufficient time allocation negatively impacts the quality of education. To mitigate this, some teachers conduct extra classes to ensure the syllabus is completed and learners have sufficient time for revision. Mabusela (2018) supports this approach, recommending that teachers collaborate with learners through additional classes.

Learners experience significant challenges with Financial Literacy terminology, particularly when interpreting and accurately recording transactions in the relevant accounts. This is corroborated by Ngwenya et al. (2020), who found that learners often encounter unfamiliar language in Financial Literacy, making the terminology difficult to grasp. Consequently, learners may lose interest in the subject and develop negative attitudes towards it, a point supported by Jonda and Modise (2022), who noted that difficulties with Financial Literacy concepts can contribute to ongoing poor performance in EMS. Learners also face practical challenges, such as drawing up columns in activity books due to a lack of provided workbooks. Furthermore, while some EMS teachers possess knowledge of Financial Literacy, they often struggle to explain concepts effectively,

which impedes learners' achievement of the intended learning objectives.

Teachers acknowledge the importance of supplementary sources to create an engaging Financial Literacy classroom experience where learners are sufficiently stimulated. However, there is a notable shortage of hardware resources, such as projectors, computers, and other essential equipment. Mdhlalose and Mlambo (2023) emphasise that hardware resources are a crucial technological component required for effective teaching and learning, including tools such as laptops, computers, video machines, mobile phones, data projectors and smartboards. Although teachers recognise the potential of social media platforms to improve the learning experience in Financial Literacy, many learners lack access to suitable devices, and those who do often cannot afford the data bundles required for active participation. This is reinforced by Ndlovu (2022), who emphasised that digital tools, including platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, Skype, Google, and Microsoft Teams, are widely utilised by secondary school teachers and learners to support learning.

## 6. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the difficulties faced by EMS teachers and learners in teaching and engaging with Financial Literacy within the CAPS curriculum. The findings indicate that the principal challenges include insufficient teacher knowledge, overcrowded classrooms, limited time allocation, complex subject terminology, and inadequate access to technological resources. Collectively, these challenges impede effective curriculum implementation and contribute to learners' continued underachievement in Financial Literacy.

A key conclusion is that a lack of subject expertise among EMS teachers significantly restricts their ability to teach Financial Literacy with confidence and depth. Teachers without an Accounting background often avoid Financial Literacy topics or rely on traditional, teacher-centred methods that do not foster conceptual understanding. Overcrowded classrooms exacerbate these issues, limiting opportunities for learner participation, feedback, and individual support, which ultimately diminishes the quality of learning.

Furthermore, restricted time allocation for EMS lessons hinders teachers from covering the required Financial Literacy content and providing learners with adequate opportunities to practise essential accounting skills. The technical language and terminology used in

Financial Literacy pose an additional challenge, particularly for learners who are taught in a language that is not their first. Similarly, limited access to technology and digital learning resources in rural schools reduces opportunities for interactive, engaging, and learner-centred instruction.

It is therefore concluded that improving Financial Literacy education requires ongoing professional development for EMS teachers, fair distribution of educational resources, and curriculum reform to ensure sufficient instructional time. Future research should explore the effectiveness of teacher development initiatives, the integration of ICT in Financial Literacy teaching and learning, and practical approaches to managing class sizes to foster a more inclusive and effective educational setting in South African schools.

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