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e-ISSN 2519-593X

Perspectives in Education

2022 40(2): 129-142

## PUBLISHED:

08 June 2022

## RECEIVED:

05 September 2021

## ACCEPTED:

07 January 2022



Published by the UFS

<http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/pie>

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# Teachers' perceptions of the factors influencing rural school Grade 12 Business Studies learner performance in the National Senior Certificate

## Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions of teacher factors affecting the dwindling Grade 12 learners' performance in Business Studies National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations at the rural Umbumbulu circuit of Umlazi district, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore teachers' perceptions. Five Grade 12 teachers were purposively selected from five rural secondary schools that offered Business Studies as a subject of teaching and learning in the Umbumbulu circuit. The case study research design was used to focus on a few participants who had lived experiences of teaching Business Studies at Grade 12 in rural schools and could relate to dominant factors influencing learner performance in this subject. Data were generated through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis was used as a method of analysing qualitative data with the purpose of identifying salient traits in data that could develop into themes. The study found that teacher factors influencing learner performance in Grade 12 Business Studies were teacher approaches to teaching Business Studies, timetabling and impediments to innovative teaching and assessment in the form of rural contextual factors such as large classes and a shortage of textbooks. The study nurtures awareness of teacher factors influencing rural school learners' performance in Grade 12 Business Studies, so that Business Studies teachers in emerging economies can think of ways to address these factors to improve learner performance.*

**Keywords:** *Business Studies, learner performance, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, timetabling, large classes.*

## 1. Introduction and background

The persistent decline in learner performance in Grade 12 generally, and in Business Studies particularly, has been a cause for concern for the Department of Basic Education (DBE). In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education uses the Grade 12 learners' end-of-year results to measure performance in public schools. It has become a trend that

principals of secondary schools also use these results to measure teachers and learners' performance in their respective schools (Moletsane, 2012). According to Alsubaie (2016), the central function of a public school is to deliver the curriculum effectively. The implication of effective curriculum delivery is that all schools should demonstrate quality teaching and learning processes that are consistent with the effective implementation of the curriculum.

Many South African teachers face daily challenges of having to cope with additional pressures of curriculum reform, as well as high performance expectations, with limited resources and support (Du Plessis, 2017). Despite this, teachers try to ascertain that regardless of the circumstances under which they teach, Grade 12 results remain pleasing to the Department of Education (Letsoalo, 2018).

To maximise effective teaching, Business Studies teachers must consult numerous textbooks when preparing for their lessons. However, using many textbooks may not necessarily bring about the same desired effect in all learners. Some learners may find the language and presentation style of one textbook exciting and meaningful, and remain indifferent with other textbooks; hence, the assumption that utilising a variety of textbooks is beneficial to learners cannot be a complete universal reality (Meintjes, Henrico & Kroon, 2015). In addition, while the subject is plagued by the curriculum reforms, training and support provided to teachers is inadequate. Although workshops are organised for teachers, support and follow-up visits to monitor the implementation of changes are missing. Therefore, teachers found workshops to be ineffective in providing them with the knowledge necessary to understand new content (Dube, 2020).

In South Africa, studies (Mamabolo, Kerrin & Kele, 2017; Ntshangase & Ezeuduji, 2020) indicate that active learning in a business-simulated learning environment can enhance learners' entrepreneurial skills, and this can best be facilitated by qualified teachers. Entrepreneurial skills are essential for learners as they help them create value, new wealth and new jobs, and are important for growing the South African economy (Meintjes *et al.*, 2015). This is the contribution of Business Studies to the school curriculum, since entrepreneurship is part of the subject's learning content alongside problem-solving skills, which constitute one of the chapters in the Grade 12 Business Studies learning content, and entails inculcating the ability to solve life-related problems in learners. Dube (2020) argues that qualified Business Studies teachers are needed to promote the creation of as many ideas as possible during the problem-solving process before focusing on the feasibility of the solutions. However, the lack of qualified teachers in rural areas continue to compromise learner academic performance in Business Studies, with schools achieving results that do not please the Department of Basic Education.

The Department of Basic Education in South Africa makes reasonable attempts to improve Grade 12 results by introducing interventions aimed at assisting learners. Some of these interventions take the form of programmes such as winter schools, spring classes and Saturday classes that are fully funded (Mkhize & Otu, 2018). Business Studies as a basic education subject is included in these interventions by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education. This suggests that this subject forms part of a group of subjects whose final end-of-year results require urgent improvement for the education department to achieve desirable objectives. Despite these interventions, Grade 12 Business Studies results show a persistent decline in learner performance in schools in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and in Umlazi district that incorporates the Umbumbulu circuit. The following table bears testimony to this.

**Table 1:** Analysis of Grade 12 Business Studies results in KwaZulu-Natal province and Umlazi district in South Africa

Year	Subject	Number wrote KZN province	Number achieved 30 % and above KZN province	Number wrote Umlazi district	Number achieved 30 % and above Umlazi district
2014	Business Studies	60157	71.7	9851	76.6
2015	Business Studies	60504	69.5	9712	75.5
2016	Business Studies	65390	67.8	9653	74.7
2017	Business Studies	55772	63.1	8980	66.4
2018	Business Studies	51588	59.5	8369	59.6

Source: Adapted from Department of Basic Education (2019): Report on the 2018 NSC Examination for Business Studies

Table 1 indicates that there has been a steady decline in learner performance in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and Umlazi district in terms of the number of learners who obtained 30% and above, expressed as a percentage in Business Studies from years 2014 to 2018. The statistics clearly show the downwards trajectory pointing to the dwindling performance at provincial and district levels. While 59.6% of learners in the Umlazi district achieved at least a 30% pass in Business Studies in the year 2018, only 46.2% achieved at least a 40% pass in the subject in year 2019 (Department of Basic Education, 2019). Based on this, the study sought to explore teachers' perceptions of teacher factors affecting Grade 12 rural school learners' performance in the Business Studies National Senior Certificate examinations (NSC) in rural schools in the Umbumbulu circuit, and their implications for teaching practice.

The question, "What are teacher factors influencing Grade 12 Business Studies learners' performance in the NSC examination?" is therefore central to the study. The importance of Business Studies is justified by the nature of challenges contemporary businesses face, not only in new products invention but also in introducing change to the management of this invention for the purposes of organisational growth and subsistence in the competitive business context (Mamula & Popovic-Pantic, 2015). However, it is amazing that only three per cent of research reports on business and management studies and little of this account for innovation in conventional business management practices (Jelaca, 2016).

## 2. Literature review

For purposes of this article, this section is divided into three sub-sections covering the rural context of teaching, learner performance and brief literature on factors influencing learner performance, and Business Studies as a subject of teaching and learning.

## 2.1 The rural context of teaching

Poor school management (leadership) in South Africa yields poor results, especially in provinces overwhelmed by rural areas, as sometimes teacher absenteeism is rarely monitored and learners in such schools are left vulnerable (Motala, 2011). This suggests that principals and school management teams (SMTs) in rural schools do not manage schools properly. Poorly managed schools mean that there is very little involvement of parents as school governing bodies (SGBs) scarcely participate in school matters (Atchia & Chinapah, 2019). SGBs should provide support to principals on how the school should function. If this does not happen, the whole school does not function properly.

Mkhize and Otu (2018) alluded to the fact that the malfunctioning of schools in rural areas lies with poor management and disorganised SGBs, rendering schools unable to offer desirable support such as libraries, computers and the internet facilities required for teachers to assist learners to perform better. Self-confidence in studying is but one lacking characteristic in rural school learners owing to poor family structure epitomised by single parenting, poor parent support and deprived economic status, which give rise to poor academic achievement by learners (Chibale & Nakamba, 2018). This indicates that academic achievement is not only about learners' behaviour and their perceptions of learning, but also about school management and the involvement of parents in school matters.

## 2.2 Learner performance and brief factors influencing learner performance

Learner performance, also referred to as learners' academic achievement, forms the basis for the advancement of a country's social and economic development and growth (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Learner performance is heavily influenced by the teaching styles and pedagogies teachers use during lesson presentation as they attempt to inspire learners to comprehend difficult concepts and to enhance learners' interest in their instructional offerings (Mlambo, 2011). Teacher characteristics encompassing teaching behaviour demonstrated by the teacher towards the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as the experience of the teacher, influence learners' academic achievement (Aziz, Mahmud & Muda, 2019). Teachers' professional competencies as demonstrated in comprehensive and profound knowledge of the subject the teacher teaches, often translate to high levels of learner academic achievement (Long, Ibrahim & Koang, 2014).

The teachers' role makes a significant contribution to how learners apply themselves in the learning process and achieve in class (Atchia & Chinapah, 2019). This implies that teachers' engagement with learners is not only limited to the delivery of content but also includes the role of teacher as a parent to learners, the provision of counselling, social work and sometimes role modelling. Assan (2019) argues that not all teachers understand these roles because most teachers interpret their engagement with learners only as a commitment to teaching the subjects allocated to them, at the complete exclusion of other perceived roles. It is true that amongst many other challenges facing learners, domestic, psychological, cognitive, physical, mental and comprehension challenges with a direct impact on how they achieve in class, are highly prevalent (Bannister *et al.*, 2018). This suggests that teachers must not only be concerned with the delivery of content but should also take keen interest in addressing these challenges during their interaction with learners (Harb & El Shaarawi, 2006). Most teachers may not be aware of the prevalence of these challenges when learners' academic performance decline in their specific subjects.

### 2.3 Business Studies as a subject of teaching and learning

According to the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) for Business Studies, the subject “deals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values critical for informed, productive, ethical and responsible participation in the formal and informal economic sectors” (DBE, 2011: 8). Joshua and Bibiano (2015) assert that Business Studies has a well-established specialised subject matter content knowledge that is essential in the school curriculum. Acquisition of this specialised knowledge equips learners with relevant information they need to understand the ever-changing business and technological advancements in the world of work (Odundo, 2012; Joshua & Bibiano, 2015). Furthermore, specialised knowledge of Business Studies provides learners an opportunity beyond their normal lives since it equips them with knowledge and skills they need for potential employability, enterprise capability and responsible citizenship (America & Mallon, 2020; Fletcher *et al.*, 2011; Kimotho, 2016). Consequently, teachers should utilise relevant teaching and learning strategies to empower all learners from all backgrounds with suitable knowledge and skills (Meintjes, Henrico & Kroon, 2016). For teachers to adjust to the context where learning takes place and the diversity of learners, pedagogical changes are needed. This entails a combination of discipline-specific knowledge, knowledge about pedagogy and the curriculum, knowledge about the learners and their context and practical knowledge (America & Skelly, 2021; Emeasoba & Igwe, 2016).

The Business Studies curriculum has four main topics that include the subject matter knowledge: business environments, business operations, business roles and business ventures. These topics involve understanding and critical thinking on specific business activities, learning objectives and teaching strategies (Kimotho, 2016; Meintjes, Henrico & Kroon, 2016; Sithole, 2012). Business Studies emphasises teaching and learning of the theory and practice, and of business principles that support the enhancement of entrepreneurial and sustainable initiatives and economic growth (America & Skelly, 2021; Emeasoba & Igwe, 2016). Although Business Studies knowledge is mainly theoretical, active learning methods are essential to increase real-world relevance of the subject and the acquisition of skills and knowledge required to keep up with the rapidly changing business environment (America & Skelly, 2021). Therefore, teachers must understand and use various innovative ways of teaching and assessment that are consistent with the focus of the subject and the requirements for examinations and any other formal assessment.

The study on which this article reports is underpinned by Dweck and Leggett's (1988) Achievement Goal Theory, which considers all aspects that contribute to good or poor performance of students at colleges and learners in school contexts. According to this theory, the achievement of goals is more a function of the situation or context. Maehr and Zuscho (2009) argue that the level of learners' achievement motivation varies across school contexts, suggesting that goal approval is based on arrangements arising from the situation. Hickey (1997) suggested that there is a strong influence of contextual cues in learners achieving or not achieving goals. The Achievement Goal Theory proposes that for learners to achieve better results, it is wise to not only focus on teaching, but also on the context in which the learner is situated. Based on this, it will be reasonable to suggest that despite teacher efforts, rural school learners' academic performance differs from the academic performance of learners in other school contexts, since learners in different contexts do not share the same levels of achievement motivation.

A study conducted on teacher factors influencing learners' academic achievement in the Kenya Certificate in Secondary Education that found weekly teaching loads and the administration of learners' assignments to be among other factors influencing learner performance, sampled teachers across all secondary school contexts and teaching subjects in Nyandarua County (Kimani, Kara & Njagi 2013). Another study conducted in Zambia on the factors influencing poor examination performance by learners in the Grade 12 Business Studies National Examination in Commerce, sampled learners, teachers, heads of commerce departments and headmasters of three secondary schools in the City of Ndola (Chibale & Nakamba 2018). However, the current South African study seeks to report on teacher factors influencing Grade 12 Business Studies rural school learners' performance in the NSC examination. This suggests a gap in research conducted in developing countries, as no research has yet been reported on this phenomenon in this subject of teaching and learning in a rural context. This study attempts to narrow this gap.

### 3. Research methods and design

A qualitative case study research design was adopted, and the researchers positioned themselves in the interpretive paradigm in order to pursue rich and thick descriptions of factors affecting Grade 12 Business Studies learners' performance in the Umbumbulu circuit.

### 4. Sampling method, sample size and ethical considerations

Case study methods of sampling were used to select five participants from five rural schools that offered Business Studies as an instructional offering at Grade 12 in the Umbumbulu circuit. These schools were conveniently and purposively selected as research sites owing to their proximity and accessibility to one of the researchers (Remler & Ryzin, 2014). The choice of schools located in the rural settings was meant to allow the sample to be a true representation of the target population in terms of typical attributes (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). The choice of five participants was motivated by Dworkin's (2012) idea that case study research seeks to report on the depth, rather than on the breadth of the case and phenomenon being studied. Access to research sites was ethically negotiated by seeking permission to conduct the study with the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal's research ethics committee that granted this permission by extending ethical protocol HSSREC/00001164/2020 to the researcher. Consent letters requesting teachers' participation in the study were issued to them, indicating that participation was voluntary, and stating their right to decline the request and to withdraw from participating if they felt like it (Choi, 2017). The copy of the consent letter was appended to the ethical clearance application form submitted to the research ethics office. Pseudonyms were used during data presentation to protect the identity of the participants, and participants' responses to interview questions were treated with confidentiality.

### 5. Data collection procedure

The study used face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to collect data to construct meaning and develop an understanding of the phenomenon as subject to participants' experiences. A series of questions were formulated for all interviewees; however, the researchers also asked probing questions to seek further clarity on participants' responses to scheduled questions (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The interview schedule was first piloted with three Grade 11 teachers who had previously taught Grade 12 Business Studies, and the research supervisor reviewed this schedule in order to correct faults and measure the response times. This

enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the instrument. To enable the researchers to generate transcribed interview versions, permission to use a tape-recorder during the interviews was obtained from participants. This was to guarantee an even more accurate report on the interviews than hand-written reports.

## 6. Data analysis

The researchers used thematic analysis to make meaning of data. Bernard (2018) suggests that inductive thematic analysis is more relevant in understanding any phenomenal issues when exploring more than just a single truth. To gain familiarity with the data before transcribing sound into text, the researchers repeatedly listened to the voice-recorded interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and their intimacy with the data was enhanced through numerous readings of the interview transcripts. Open coding was used for the purposes of clustering specific themes together in ways compatible with qualitative research to enable the forming of initial data relating to the phenomenon being investigated, by sectioning categories based on information collected (Brennen, 2017; Bryman & Bell, 2019). Evidence in support of findings will be drawn from extracts from participants' responses to interview questions.

## 7. Findings

The study sought to establish teacher factors influencing Grade 12 learners' dwindling performance in the Business Studies NSC examination.

### *7.1 Teachers' approaches to teaching Business Studies*

From the data analysed, it was evident that one of the causes of the factors affecting learner performance related to methods teachers use to teach in the classroom. This was evident in participants' responses to the question "Which methods do you normally use to teach Business Studies to your learners in class?" One participant offered the following response to this question:

Due to limited contact time, I end up doing remote teaching where I ask one learner to teach on my behalf; I believe that it builds their confidence and understanding of the content. I normally make copies of different resources including copies of textbooks, memorandum of previous question papers etc. when I do get time with them, that is the time I explain the notes I gave them (Zama).

The participant in the above extract used remote teaching as an approach to facilitating teaching and learning in class because time for contact, face-to-face teaching is insufficient and believes that remote teaching inspired the confidence and understanding of subject content in learners. The participant suggests that remote teaching occurs when the teacher is not physically in class but asks a learner to lead classroom interaction using teaching resources such as textbook copies and memoranda to previous question papers. This indicates that the participant is of the opinion that learners can learn from each other in class, even in the absence of the teacher.

Another participant expressed the following sentiments in response to the same question presented and/or asked above:

I use textbooks to summarise notes on the board for learners to write as they do not have textbooks. I seldom group them, sometimes storytelling but mostly, I use a teacher-centred approach to cover for ATP. The environment surrounding learners I teach does not allow me to vary strategies as I have to explain everything to them (Zoleka).

The participant in the above extract claims to have used a textbook as a method central to the delivery of content in class. Moreover, the participant indicates to have used storytelling as an alternative method of teaching when learners are organised into groups. The participant also mentioned that she used teacher-centred methods of instruction because in the rural environment of Umbumbulu, she could not vary strategies to include cases of existing businesses such as a shopping mall. The reason being that learners could not relate to this since such businesses are non-existent in this environment, thus, she had to explain everything. The participant could therefore not use teacher-centred methods interchangeably with learner-centred methods.

Another participant shared the following thoughts in response to the same question relating to the methods they normally use for teaching Business Studies:

By preparing notes for learners to read repetitively so that they memorise content, and using plain and simple English for learners help them (Sipho).

The participant in the above excerpt cites rote learning as a teaching approach that he used to facilitate teaching by using notes prepared from the content of the textbook. These notes were formulated in ways that simplified the textbook content as complex English words and terms were expressed in a regular and straightforward language for learners to memorise with understanding. The participant asserts that this assisted learners with their learning.

This shows that the most dominant approaches teachers used to teach Business Studies owing to the context in which learners are situated, as the Achievement Goal Theory suggests, which ultimately had an influence on learners' performance were remote teaching, using a textbook, storytelling and rote learning.

## 7.2 Timetabling

Participants also felt that the slots for Business Studies in the timetable had a bearing on how they taught the subject to learners in the rural context. They raised concerns that the period for Business Studies is always in the afternoon when they were already tired. This transpired from participants' responses to the question "What can you say about the timing of the Business Studies' period in the school time-table?" The following extracts from the interview transcript support this idea:

All periods for Business Studies are after break towards the last or during the last period when teachers and learners are tired, earlier periods are for Mathematics, Accounting and Languages ... (Mahle)

All the time Business Studies is taught when teachers and learners are tired after break ... and it is even worse because there are so many learners in just one class, making it difficult for the teacher to control. (Zoleka)

A participant in the following extract observed that teachers face challenges with learners sleeping in class, with low levels of motivation due to periods being placed after break:

Teachers struggle with learners sleeping in class, teenage pregnancy, peer pressure and lack of motivation during the Business Studies period that often appears late during the day after break in the timetable ... (Zama).

The assumption is that, according to participant Zama, If the period was scheduled earlier during the day, say in the morning before break, the teacher would be able to teach

an all-attentive group of learners who will be focusing on learning as the teacher teaches, leading to a better understanding of content that would eventually lead to improved learner performance. This also suggests the likelihood that learners would not fall asleep while the teacher presents the lesson, and the teacher would be vibrant while learners would be fresh and motivated to participate in class.

### *7.3 Impediments to innovative teaching and assessment*

The large number of learners in Business Studies classes, coupled with the shortage of textbooks in most rural schools, challenge the creativity of teachers when teaching. Teachers could not utilise other teaching strategies deemed to be more appropriate and effective due to large classes. This surfaced when participants were asked the question "Does the size of the class impact on how you teach Business Studies?" This question triggered the following response:

Floor space [is a] problem. I have over 50 learners in one class and it is not easy to assess and give immediate feedback to learners owing to class size. It is not easy to conduct group discussions owing to the shortage of textbooks (Sipho).

Participant Sipho observes that the size of the class, accompanied by the shortage of textbooks hinders the use of different innovative teaching strategies such as group discussions. The participant also notes that it was difficult to give learners more assessment tasks and provide timeous feedback because of numerous scripts received from learners. Large numbers of scripts received from learners meant that more time had to be devoted to marking.

Another participant had this to say in response to the same question on the impact of class size on teaching:

I think I need to give learners more assessment tasks using innovative forms of assessment to prepare learners for formal tests, but I cannot because the number of learners in my class is too big (Zola).

The participant in the above excerpt indicates that they tend to avoid the use of innovative ways of assessing learners as the class size increases, especially when learners have to be informally assessed in preparation for formal assessment because marking becomes cumbersome. The assumption is that, with less use of innovative ways of preparing learners for Grade 12 formal quarterly tests and end-of-year NSC final examination paper, learners' academic achievement tends to be poor.

## **8. Discussion**

Findings presented in this article suggest that methods teachers use to teach Business Studies to Grade 12 learners in rural schools may not be compatible with good learner performance. Mlambo (2011) alluded in the literature reviewed in this article that teaching methodologies teachers adopt when teaching learners in class have a considerable effect on learners' performance. This suggests that teachers may use innovative methods to inspire learner understanding of subject matter. Aziz, Mahmud and Muda (2019) report that teacher quality characteristics coupled with a teacher-centred approach positively correlates with effective teaching, which in turn gives rise to enhanced learner performance. While participants in this study used textbooks as a teaching methodology, Bregman and Bryner (2012) found that the

scarcity of textbooks among learners inhibits teachers' efforts towards the achievement of higher learning outcomes which, once addressed, can enable teachers to improve learners' academic performance. Consistent with this finding is the Achievement Goal theoretical assumption that teacher practices, including teachers' choice of teaching methods, have a significant influence in shaping goal achievement and academic performance by learners (Maehr & Zusho, 2009).

Findings also indicate that the positioning of the subject in the school or class timetable has a major effect on the way the teacher teaches Business Studies to learners in class. Klein and Lawrence (2012) indicated that there were various levels of attention at different times of the day on the part of the learner, with learners experiencing lesser levels of attention as the day develops towards the afternoon. This happens despite added effort and innovative teaching methods applied by teachers to attract learners' attention. Pope (2016) suggests that the time-of-day effect, perceived as the variance in productivity at different times of the day owing to stamina effects, results from changes in the teachers' teaching quality. This gives rise to a decision to move certain teaching periods considered to be more affected by time of day such as Mathematics to the morning, and others such as English to the afternoon (Pope 2016). This renders teachers of the latter subject unable to achieve pleasing levels of learner academic performance in the subject and this is consistent with this finding reported in this article.

Certain impediments to innovative teaching and assessment that teachers cannot control such as the size of the class frequently constrain learner academic performance. Teaching in large classes becomes cumbersome for teachers who often find it challenging to engage individual learners in learning. Teachers cannot do what they would like to do to enable learners to achieve desirable levels of academic achievement, while accessing opportunities to participate during the lesson becomes complicated for learners (Nguyen, 2015). Feza, Juan and Visser (2015) observe that large class sizes make it difficult for teachers to provide individual attention and support needed by learners because of high teacher-pupil ratios in rural schools. Large classes are not compatible with the use of learner-centred teaching methods directed at enhancing learner performance. Teaching methodologies, the positioning of the subject in the class timetable and impediments to innovative teaching such as class size are teacher factors influencing learner performance and are compatible with the Achievement Goal Theory since this theory considers all factors that contribute to good or poor learner performance in a pedagogic context.

A study conducted in Gambia, on teacher-related factors as predictors of academic achievement in English Grammar (Olagbaju, 2020) recommended based on its findings that more research focusing on teacher-related variables influencing learners' academic achievement should be conducted in contexts where English is used as a second language for instructional purposes in developing countries. It is based on this recommendation that the current study that sought to report on teacher factors influencing rural school learners' performance in Grade 12 Business Studies was conducted in a developing country.

## 9. Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusions drawn from the findings presented in this article suggest that Grade 12 Business Studies teachers could not use innovative and learner-centred methods of instruction due to constrained time for face-to-face contact teaching. The rural context where the schools are

situated also made it difficult for teachers to use methods that relate to the real business-world. The large class size that is highly prevalent in rural schools also presented difficulties with which appropriate methods of teaching Business Studies can be used to enhance learner understanding. It can also be concluded that the scheduling of Business Studies in the school's timetable contributes to the way the teacher interacts with learners in class. Concerning this, participants stated that the likelihood of exhaustion affects teachers' levels of teaching efficacy when teaching periods are placed towards the end of the day. All this points to teacher-related factors influencing Grade 12 Business Studies rural learners' academic achievement in the NSC examination; these need to be addressed with a view to improving rural school teachers' efficacy.

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