

Factors contributing to Grade 10 learners' choice of Commercial subjects in
Mpumalanga Province (Nkangala district).

by

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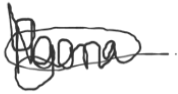
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I, Patrick Ngoma, declare that “*Factors contributing to Grade 10 learners’ choice of Commerce subjects in Mpumalanga Province (Nkangala District)*” is my own work and has not been previously submitted in any form whatsoever, by myself or anyone else, to this university or at any other educational institution for any degree or examination purposes. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and duly acknowledged by means of complete references.



30 November 2025

Signature

Date

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I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to the successful completion of this research.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the Grade 10 learners of Mpumalanga Province (Nkangala district), whose voices and experiences form the heart of this study. May your aspirations and determination continue to shape a future where every subject choice is informed and empowered.

ABSTRACT

This study explored “*Factors contributing to Grade 10 learners’ choice of commercial subjects in Grade 10 in the Mpumalanga Province (Nkangala district)*”, with a specific focus on the Nkangala District. The study was guided by four research questions that examined (1) the extent to which Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) teachers in Grades 7–9 influence learners’ future commercial subject choices, (2) the forms of support schools provide to Grade 9 learners when exploring commercial subject opportunities, (3) learners’ perceptions of commercial subjects, and (4) the role of the Mpumalanga Department of Education in the declining enrolment in the commercial stream.

Constructivist learning theory, which emphasises that learners create meaning through interactions with teachers, peers, and their larger learning environment, served as the foundation for this study. The theory offered a framework for understanding how learner views are shaped by inadequate teacher preparation, limited exposure to subject opportunities, and weak institutional support, which in turn affects subject-choice decisions.

To enable a thorough examination of participant perspectives, meanings, and experiences, a qualitative research approach located within the interpretivist paradigm was utilised. The researcher was able to investigate the phenomena in its actual setting by using a case study approach. Grade 9 learners, PL1 EMS teachers, departmental heads, and subject advisors from a few chosen secondary schools in the Nkangala District made up the population. Purposive sampling was used to choose 25 learners, five teachers, five department heads, and two subject advisors who were directly involved in EMS teaching, curriculum oversight, or subject advisory positions. In order to obtain genuine participant replies, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews that employed verbatim questioning.

The findings reveal several key challenges: EMS is often taught by unqualified or underprepared teachers; there is a general lack of career guidance in schools; parental involvement in subject choice is limited due to socioeconomic and educational barriers; and there is minimal departmental promotion or marketing of commercial subjects. These issues are compounded by misconceptions about commercial careers and the perception that subjects like Accounting are too difficult or irrelevant.

The study concludes that the drop in enrolment in commercial subjects is a systematic problem that stems from deficiencies in instruction, institutions, and policies. Future studies should look into the pedagogical content expertise of EMS teachers, parental viewpoints on subject choice, and the effects of curriculum reform on subject-choice trends in Mpumalanga's several districts.

Key concepts: Teacher training, stakeholder engagement, Economic and management sciences, commercial subjects, national economic development goals and career guidance programs.

Abbreviation	Full Meaning
EMS	Economic and Management Sciences
DoE	Department of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
SGB	School Governing Body
LO	Life Orientation
SA	South Africa
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
PL1	Post Level 1 Educator
HOD	Head of Department
DH	Departmental Head
CI	Curriculum Implementer / Subject Advisor
GET	General Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
QL	Qualitative Research
LSM	Living Standards Measure
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
DBE	Department of Basic Education
SMT	School Management Team
MPOE	Mpumalanga Department of education

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction and Background

Economics is the study of how people in our society choose to use limited resources to meet unlimited needs and wants in a way that is effective, equitable, and sustainable, (Department of Education 2011). Economics should prepare learners to comprehend issues related to human rights, consider how wealth is created, and take part in efforts to reduce poverty.

A greater unemployment rate, slow economic growth, high standard of life, inequality, and poverty are challenges faced by South Africa. Although the nation faces the aforementioned challenges, many secondary school learners tend not to choose commercial subjects in order to gain more knowledge about how to address the problems the nation faces.

Mbawuni and Nimako (2015) discovered that there has been a global decline in the number of tertiary students majoring in accounting in recent years, particularly in AngloSaxon nations like the USA (Albrecht & Sack, 2000), the UK (Marshall, 2003), Ireland (Byrne & Willis, 2005), Australia, and New Zealand (Wells & Fieger 2004). Additionally, it has been noted that accountants have a long history of negative public perception due to numerous stereotypes about them (Allen, 2004; Byrne & Willis, 2005).

This indicates that South Africa is not the only country that is faced by the decline in the number of learners taking commercial subjects. As the need for graduates in accounting rises, it is critical for the development of future careers in the accounting field that learners' perspectives on the accounting profession and prospects of employment as accounting professionals are taken into consideration (Samsuri, Arifin and Hussin 2016).

As a teacher with a focus on commercial subjects at Victor Khanye Circuit, Nkangala district in the Mpumalanga province, the researcher has been exposed to the issue. Every year, the researcher noticed a decline in the number of learners choosing commercial

subjects in Grade 10 others opt to leave accounting in Grade 11 or 12. I chose this research based on the surrounding circumstances. Given South Africa's economic problems, it is essential that learners are taught how to be successful entrepreneurs. Achieving this will be made easier by simultaneously teaching learners economics, business studies, and accounting.

According to South African Institute of chartered accountants, (SAICA 2021) there are about 47 889 registered chartered accountants in South Africa. SAICA statistics indicates that there is currently 7,9% black African women registered as CAs of the 47 889 registered CAs, while 14,8% and 4.2% of the 47 889 are Africans and coloured race respectively. This suggests that South Africa has the biggest accounting skills shortage in the world groups respectively. Despite this, data indicate that there are generally fewer learners enrolling in commercial subjects in secondary school. The number of learners enrolling in commercial subjects has decreased over the last ten years in Mpumalanga province, according to statistics released by the Department of Education (DBE 2022). The statistics unambiguously show a decline in the number of learners choosing commercial subjects. According to several studies, the high rate of failure in specific subjects is a factor in the decline in learners choosing that subject. Sebusi (2023), Thabakadimene (2024) and Hendriks (2021).

The Mpumalanga department of education appears to place more of an emphasis on science subjects than on other subjects. The Business, Commerce, and Management (BCM) winter camp was attended by about 250 learners from the Mpumalanga Department of Education's Nkangala district in 2022. The goal was to concentrate on the top learners while sending the underachievers to their home schools or other preferred institutions to receive education. None of the implemented interventions seems to have been successful in producing the desired effects, as evidenced by the passing rates for accounting being 66.1 percent in 2020 and 70.0 percent in 2021, and those for Economics being 66.5 percent in 2020 and 52.8 percent in 2021, (DBE 2021).

Many learners in South Africa's public schools prefer the general stream over commercial subjects. Accounting, according to Evans (2010), is a formal business language used to

express financial data. This language is structured and adheres to conventions that express meaning specific to the business sector (Evans 2010), before selecting a program of study, learners must have knowledge, exposure, and assistance. Learners' perceptions play an important role in shaping their subject choices at the end of grade 9. When learners hold a positive perception of a subject, they are more likely to select it in the Further education and training (FET) band.

Furthermore, they must understand the fundamentals of financial literacy, as a result, it is critical to educate financial literacy in grades 8 and 9. (Schreuder 2009). This is due to the fact that many economic management sciences (EMS) teachers lack the necessary qualifications.

Many teachers, particularly those trained in the traditional procedural bookkeeping technique, may find it difficult to integrate their practices with the goals of the new curriculum due to a lack of conceptual knowledge and accounting comprehension (Ngwenya 2012). Teachers are vital in explaining policies to learners and assisting them in understanding them (Taylor & Vinjevold 1999).

This argument is highlighted further by Schreuder (2009), who goes on to state that teachers must be capable of applying higher-level thinking skills and nurturing those abilities in their learners. They must also be absolute specialists in their industry. (Coetzee 2016) concurs that when Economics Management Science was originally introduced as a curriculum in 2012, there were few teachers who possessed the appropriate academic credentials to teach the subject. Accounting, business studies, and economics teachers were responsible with imparting this new topic to Senior Phase learners (Schreuder 2009). Accounting, business studies, and economics teachers were responsible with imparting these new topics to Senior Phase learners (Schreuder 2009). It is apparent that this action has damaged the financial foundation that these teachers have constructed for their learners. Learners generally struggle in Grade 12 and perform badly on tests if they are not adequately taught in younger grades.

The problem was that many of these teachers lacked the necessary training to teach all aspects of the subject, so they tended to concentrate on their area of expertise.

Economics Management Science, on the other hand, requires teachers to be educated in all the numerous disciplines found in the learning domain (Schreuder 2009). The lack of exposure to accounting in the Grade 8 and 9 curricula, according to Letshwene's (2014) research, was the major problem for accounting teachers teaching in Grade 10 i.e., financial literacy.

1.2 Significance of the study

Commercial subjects tend to have a low number of enrolments which is also subjected to many learners dropping out or changing accounting to other subjects. This study has explored the implication of learners choosing general subjects over commercial ones. This study is important because it may assist the Mpumalanga Department of education and other stakeholders to make informed decisions when implementing policies and the assistance given to learners with regards to subject choices. This may increase the number of learners choosing of commercial subjects.

Furthermore, the results may prepare learners to comprehend the significance of commercial subjects in the current state of the economy and help parents, learners, and the Department of Education better understand the factors that prevented learners from choosing commercial subjects. If a thorough investigation into the implications of learners' subject selections in the province of Mpumalanga is not carried out, there won't be any improvement in learners' preferences for commercial subjects.

1.3 Problem Statement

In South Africa, many learners choose general stream subjects over commercial ones. The former Minister of Basic Education, Motshekga, (2022) voiced alarm over a decline in the number of learners taking mathematics and accounting during the year 2022. According to recent data, Mpumalanga recorded a drop of approximately 18% in Grade 10 learners choosing commercial subjects between 2020 and 2024, with accounting showing the sharpest decline.

The table below illustrates this trend in the Nkangala district:

Table: 1.1

Subject	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Accounting	32%	30%	28%	26%	24%
Business Studies	41%	39%	37%	35%	34%
Economics	27%	26%	25%	24%	23%

It is evident that despite the labour market's increasing demand for skills related to commerce, this drop continues. Numerous issues have been identified by research as contributing to this tendency, including poor teacher qualifications, insufficient foundations in Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), a lack of career advice, socioeconomic restrictions, and misconceptions about the difficulty of the subjects (Mkhize & Maistry, 2017; DBE, 2020).

If these factors are not addressed, the consequences include continued misalignment between learners' subject choices and labour market needs, poor academic performance in commerce streams, and reduced opportunities for learners to pursue careers in business and finance. This situation undermines the objectives of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and South Africa's broader economic development goals.

1.4 Research question

1.4.1 Main question

What are the factors contributing to Grade 10 learners' choice of commercial subjects in Mpumalanga Province, Nkangala district ?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

1.4.2.1 To what extent are Economic and Management Sciences teachers influence their learners to choose commercial subjects in grade 10?

1.4.2.2 How do schools assist learners in grade 9 to expose them to various opportunities available when pursuing commercial subjects?

1.4.2.3 What are the perceptions of learners in Mpumalanga province, Nkangala district regarding commercial subjects?

1.4.2.4 What role does the Mpumalanga Department of Education play in the declining learner interest in the commercial stream?

1.5 Research aim and objectives

1.5.1 Research aim

The aim of this study is to explore factors contributing to Grade 10 learners' choice of commercial subjects in Mpumalanga province, Nkangala district.

1.5.2 Research objectives

This study seeks to:

1.5.2.1 To examine the extent to which Economic and Management Science influence their learners to choose commercial subjects in grade 10.

1.5.2.2 To explore schools' assistance to learners in grade 9 to expose them to various opportunities available when pursuing commercial subjects?

1.5.2.3 To determine learners' perceptions to commercial subjects in Mpumalanga province, Nkangala District.

1.5.2.4 To discover the role played by Mpumalanga Department of education, regarding the declining learner interest to commercial stream.

1.6 Research approach

The study has adopted a qualitative approach as it offers the opportunity to interact with the participants while capturing and interpreting their experiences in their own words. Also, this approach allows for the terrain of experiences and feelings of participants to be realized, and not because the researchers think qualitative methodologies are always better or more appropriate than quantitative ones, but rather because they are thought to represent an ideal way to provide in-depth information from the subjective perceptions, beliefs, and opinions of the subjects under study (Schoeborn, 2012).

According to Flick (2014), qualitative researchers work on the assumption that reality cannot be neatly divided into discrete, quantifiable aspects. They are known to as research tools since a significant portion of the information they gather is dependent on each individual's participation in the scene.

1.6.1 Research paradigm

The paradigm is referred to as "epistemology," "ontology," and even "research strategy" in (Neuman 2000) and (Cresswell 2003). According to (Cresswell 2007), researchers adopt a number of philosophical assumptions that form the basis of the research design process when they choose to conduct a study. When conducting research, researchers bring their own worldviews or set of beliefs, which influence the way the study is carried out and written. For this study, the researcher has decided that the Interpretivism paradigm is the most appropriate. Interpretivism holds that these context-bound features must be studied using participants' own language, experiences, and interpretations (Schreuder, 2009; Patel & Smith, 2023). This study aims to completely understand the depth and complexity of learners' viewpoints, which are beyond the scope of positivist or quantitative approaches.

With interpretivism, the researcher might use a collaborative, naturalistic approach where participants and the researcher communicate to find meaning. The study acknowledges that there are several realities shaped by individual experiences rather than a single reality by examining a variety of perspectives through interviews with learners, educators,

department heads, and subject advisors (Simons, 2009; Silverman, 2015). This is crucial to understanding the reasons behind learners' perspectives regarding commercial subjects such as accounting, business studies, and economics.

1.6. 2 Research design

A research design, in Creswell's opinion, is nothing more than a timeline for the intended study effort (Creswell 2012). It consists of "certain research methodologies, such as data gathering, data processing, and report writing." In this section, the research designs and methodology of the study are presented and explored. According to Potgieter's definition from 2017, research designs are the processes for carrying out the study, including who gave the data, when it was collected, and under what circumstances.

1.6.3 Research approach and design

Based on a critical analysis that looked for similarities across several case study definitions, (Simons 2009) developed the following definition of a case study: A case study is a detailed examination of the intricacy and distinctiveness of a specific initiative, policy, institution, program, or system from several perspectives in "real life". A case study shouldn't be viewed as a technique in and of itself, she continued. Instead, it provides a foundation for design that may be used with other techniques. Stake concurred, noting that a case study is not a logical judgment concerning the approach to employ, but rather a decision regarding what is to be explored, utilizing whatever methods we choose to research the subject.

A case study aims to pinpoint the potential examined case; it doesn't define populations or choose appropriate samples (Sagadin 1991 p. 34). In a case study, one or a small number of instances are typically examined.

1.7 Research methods [measures, procedures, and tools to gather and analyse data]

1.7.1 Sampling

The researcher used the purposive sampling approach, which enables the researcher to concentrate on the population and pinpoint its important characteristics. A sample is described as statistics or data that a researcher selects from a significant population. According to (Bertram and Christiansen 2014), sampling is the act of making decisions that make it obvious how many people will be included in the study. Five secondary schools were selected within the Mpumalanga province. The researcher has then selected the items he wanted to include in the sample based on the set and list of characteristics. The sample consisted of 5 grade 10 learners and 5 grade 9 learners from the five schools selected school, one post-level 1 educator for each school, a departmental head from each school, a member of the school governing body for each school, and the principals of the five schools.

1.7.2 Data collection

Data collection is defined by (Bhandari 2020) as a methodical procedure for gathering observation or measurement through discussions, surveys, or questionnaires. Semi structured interviews were used in this study's data collection. Participants in the interviews expressed their ideas, opinions, and understanding on what is causing the decline in learners pursuing commercial subjects in high schools. They responded to any inquiries I had. I decided on interviews since they will let the participants express themselves and interpret their experiences. My interviews were conducted in the manner of a discussion to collect data based on open-ended questions. The researcher recorded the interviews using a recording device. In the study's twenty-one one-on-one personal interviews, other topics of inquiry will be investigated to better understand the determinants and maybe because of the interviews open structure.

1.7.3 Data analysis

Data analysis involves, organizing, and providing meaning to a large amount of collected data (Silverman 2015). In conclusion, to have a thorough understanding of the phenomenon, it is essential to organize, divide, code, and analyse the data.

Themes were used in the data analysis for the research. Thematic analysis was selected since it was straightforward and adaptable for academic purposes. Thematic analysis can assist novice researchers who are apprehensive of more sophisticated qualitative analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke 2006). This technique enables the discovery, evaluation, and reporting of themes that emerge in the data (Sibisi 2019).

1.8 Ethical considerations

According to (Gray 2009), the Greek term "ethos," which refers to a person's character, is where the word "ethics" originates. It is associated with the idea of morality. In contrast to moral questions, which ask whether a behaviour is right or wrong, ethical questions ask whether a behaviour complies with a set of norms. Making sure participants don't feel uncomfortable or stressed out is essential, especially while conducting interviews (Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2001; Bertram & Christiansen 2014).

Ethics are crucial when it comes to responses. The researcher applied for ethical clearance from University of South Africa. In the end, the university's research ethics were upheld. The Head of Department and School Principals of the Mpumalanga province were consulted over the utilization of learners from the five schools. Confidentiality was preserved by only seeking the learners' biographical information rather than asking them to self-identify. As a result, the names of the participants won't be disclosed. Any information will only be used with permission (e.g., school statistics). Care will be taken to avoid any sensitive or private topics, such as inquiries regarding money, to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Regarding reactions, ethics are essential.

1.9 Elucidation of concepts

Economic management sciences: The use of various sorts of private, public, or collective resources in an efficient and effective manner to meet people's needs and desires is the focus of the field of economics and management sciences. Economic and

Management Sciences is a practical course that gives learners practical skills for both individual and communal development (DBE 2012).

Public education: education in schools, colleges and universities provided by the government (DeWitt 2012).

Commercial subjects – business related subjects which includes Accounting, Economics and Business studies.

Senior phase: Senior phase comprises Grade 7, Grade 8, and Grade 9 (DBE 2008)

Career: profession for which one trains, and which is undertaken as a permanent calling (OXFORD dictionary).

1.10 Demarcation/Delimitations/Assumptions

1.10.1 Demarcation of the study

The study is geographically demarcated within Mpumalanga Province, South Africa, with a specific focus on selected school in Nkangala district. The choice of this area is informed by its predominantly rural character and the persistent educational challenges related to subject choice, resource availability and learner exposure to career opportunities.

This study is further demarcated to grade 9 learners, as this is the critical transition point where learners select subjects for FET phase.

1.10.2 Delimitations

Delimitations refers to the boundaries that the researcher intentionally set for the study.

The study does not include learners in grade 8,9,11 and 12. Although subject choice is influenced by experiences across multiple grades, the study focuses on grade 10 because this is the formal point of subject-stream selection in South African schools. The study is limited to commercial subjects only. It doesn't look at perceptions of Science, Mathematics or Humanities subjects, even though these may also influence overall

academic pathways. The findings are based on the five purposively selected schools in Nkangala district. Therefore, the study does not claim to represent all schools in Mpumalanga or South Africa.

The research deliberately relies only on interviews rather than surveys, classroom observations, or document analysis. This decision was made to allow participants to express their views freely and in depth.

1.10.3 Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs that the researcher accepts as true but cannot directly verify within the scope of the study. It is assumed that all participants provided honest, truthful and thoughtful responses during the interview, and not deliberately distort and withhold information. The study also assumes all grade 10 learners fully understood the interview questions and were able to articulate their perceptions, experiences, and opinions clearly.

1.11 Chapter division and the structure of the dissertation

The researcher has used the following research structure for his dissertation.

Chapter 1 Introduction/ orientation

In this chapter the researcher focused on the following aspects of research, Background of the problem, Problem statement, Purpose of the study, Research questions, Significance of the study, Definition of terms, Assumption, limitations, and delimitations and Conclusion.

Chapter 2 Literature review and theoretical framework

In this chapter the researcher focused on clarifying the research description, the views of other researchers in relation to learner's subject choices and theoretical framework used in this study.

Chapter 3 Research methods and designs

In this chapter the researcher has focused on Research design, Research questions, Population and sampling, Data collection and Data analysis.

Chapter 4 Presentation of findings summary, conclusions, and recommendations

This chapter the researcher discussed the research findings.

Chapter 5 Summary, Implication and Outcomes

This chapter summarized the findings and its implications. The future suggestions for the future research were all discussed then Conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Concerns about the fall in Grade 10 learners choosing commercial subjects are widespread in the South African education system, especially in provinces like Gauteng and Mpumalanga. Using new research and empirical evidence to help comprehend this complicated subject, this literature review aimed to thoroughly investigate the various elements that contribute to this decline.

This chapter also analyses information about the development of commercial subjects as chosen subjects in Mpumalanga province schools and explores some of the causes of these swings. The role played by EMS educators as well as other contributing factors, including teachers, parents, prospective careers, academic proficiency in the subjects, peer pressure, and intrinsic motivation, will be addressed. The literature study examined recruitment strategies to support the spread of commercial subjects in schools, on whether schools should even provide commercial subjects, there is a disagreement based on existing literature.

2.2 Conceptual framework

2.2.1 Perceptions of Commercial Subjects:

It is important to look at learners' opinions of these subjects in order to comprehend the variables impacting their choice of commercial subjects in Grade 10 in Mpumalanga province. Studies have indicated that learners frequently have different views about how hard, important, and prestigious commercial subjects are (Smith & Johnson 2018). For example, compared to other subjects like mathematics or physics, some learners could find accounting or economics more difficult. A number of things, including previous educational experiences, societal views, and media portrayals of commercial subjects, can have an impact on these perceptions.

According to a study by Brown and Miller (2019), learners' impressions of commercial subjects were influenced by their interactions with peers and teachers as well as by the

subjects they were exposed to in school. Positive experiences, such as interesting and successful teaching strategies, can improve learners' perceptions of commercial subjects and spark their enthusiasm in studying them. On the other hand, unfavourable experiences or false beliefs regarding these subjects' applicability to future career paths may discourage learners from selecting them.

To encourage more interest and participation in commercial subjects, it is imperative that misconceptions be addressed and that learners have a good impression of these subjects. By presenting captivating and appropriate curriculum content, cultivating excellent teacher-learner connections, and providing career advising that emphasizes the possible advantages and opportunities connected with studying commercial subjects, schools can play a big role in this.

2.2.2 Educational Environment and Resources:

Learners' decisions about commercial subjects can be greatly influenced by the availability of these subjects in schools, as well as by the calibre of education and resources offered. The number of commercial subjects offered in schools and the resources provided to support them can differ across the province of Mpumalanga, which affects learners' access and engagement.

According to research conducted by Patel and Brown (2021), there are differences between the resources and subject offerings in rural and urban areas when it comes to the availability of commercial subjects in Mpumalanga Province's schools, while rural schools often struggled to provide access to these subjects due to low resources, urban schools usually offered a greater selection of commercial subjects and had better equipped facilities.

Additionally, learner engagement and achievement in commercial subjects can be impacted by the merit of education and teacher support provided. A study conducted in Johnson and Kim (2021), brought to light the significance of teacher preparation programs and efficient teaching strategies in fostering learner engagement and academic success in commercial subjects. Schools are more likely to draw and keep learners enrolled in

these subjects if they provide chances for professional development for educators and enough resources for teaching commercial subjects.

Promoting greater interest and enrolment in these subjects requires addressing inequities in the availability of commercial subjects and making sure that learners in diverse parts of Mpumalanga Province have fair access to resources and support.

2.2.3 The role played by Teachers and School Counsellors:

Teachers and school counsellors have a big say in what subjects' learners choose to study and what careers they choose to pursue. The judgments that learners make about commercial subjects can be significantly influenced by their encouragement, support, and guidance. The success of teacher and counsellor interventions in promoting commercial subjects is especially important in the province of Mpumalanga.

Research by Johnson & Garcia (2020) examined the influence of counselling and support services for teachers on the subject choices made by learners. According to the study, learners were more likely to think about and enrol in commercial subjects if they received individualized advice and assistance from their teachers and counsellors. Effective career guidance programs that furnish knowledge on professional routes, prospects, and the significance of commercial subjects can assist learners in making well-informed choices regarding their educational and professional paths.

Additionally, learners' views and decisions may be influenced by the attitudes and ideas that educators and counsellors hold toward commercial subjects. Teachers can help learners feel more confident and motivated to study commercial subjects by providing them with encouragement, positive reinforcement, and role modelling, however, negative feedback or a lack of support from teachers and counsellors can deter children from choosing these subjects.

Learners are better equipped to identify and pursue their interests in commercial subjects in schools that prioritize teacher professional development, comprehensive counselling services, and teacher training. Collaboration between educators, counsellors, and school administrators is necessary to provide a supportive environment that encourages learners

to consider a variety of academic and career possibilities, including those related to commercial subjects.

2.2.4 School-Based Mechanisms for Exposing Learners to Opportunities

In Grade 9, Life Orientation continues to be the main source of career assistance. According to recent research, LO classes increasingly emphasise making connections between subjects and future occupations, particularly when teachers use current labour market data and postsecondary requirements Mahlangu & Fraser, (2022). However, teacher preparation and resource accessibility are essential for successful implementation. According to a study by Mseleku (2023), many LO teachers still find it difficult to offer expert advice about commercial subjects' pathways because of their inadequate professional development and low content knowledge.

Schools frequently host workshops, assemblies, and subject-choice evenings for learners in Grade 9 and their parents. Sibanda and Ngwenya (2021) claim that these sessions are successful in assisting learners in comprehending course requirements, prospects for further education, and commercial job paths. They contend that organised subject exhibitions boost learners' self-esteem and dispel myths regarding subjects like accounting, which many learners find challenging.

Recent school-level studies report that many South African schools now utilise subject-choice booklets, career guides, and digital portals to help Grade 9 learners make informed decisions (Naicker, 2022). These guides typically map subjects to potential careers, outline admission requirements at universities and TVET colleges, and explain commercial fields such as finance, business management, economics, auditing and entrepreneurship.

Some schools use aptitude tests, career-interest evaluations, and counselling in addition to classroom instruction. learners who took part in structured aptitude tests had a better grasp of the appropriateness of commercial subjects, especially those with strong numerical or entrepreneurial characteristics, according to a 2022 Gauteng-based study by Radebe (2022). This technique contributes to exposure disparity and is more prevalent in metropolitan and fee-paying schools.

The way that learners view commercial subjects is greatly influenced by subject teachers, especially EMS teachers. According to a Kekana (2022) study, teachers who actively incorporate career talks, real-world business scenarios, and useful financial literacy exercises greatly boost learners' interest in commercial subjects.

Coordinating career programs, fostering relationships with outside parties, and making sure that Grade 9 subject-choice procedures are well-organised and appropriately conveyed to parents are all ways that school leadership contributes (Dlamini & Mkhize, 2021).

2.2.4 Family and Socioeconomic Factors:

Family history and social standing have a big influence on subjects' learners choose to study. It is important to understand how family dynamics and economic issues influence learner decisions in Mpumalanga Province, where socioeconomic discrepancies are common.

Smith and Johnson's (2019) study looked into how learners' aspirations for their careers in Mpumalanga Province were affected by their family's support and socioeconomic status. Higher socioeconomic background learners have been shown to have a preference for and inclination for commercial subject because they have greater access to resources, support systems, and opportunities for enrichment activities that contribute to their professional and academic development.

On the other hand, learners from less wealthy families can encounter impediment such inadequate financial resources, lack of parental support and restricted access to learning materials, which could hinder their capacity to investigate and follow interests in commercial subjects. Targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs, scholarships, and career counselling services, are necessary to close these gaps by giving learners from underprivileged backgrounds more help and resources.

Furthermore, learners' decisions about commercial subjects may be influenced by parental expectations and attitudes toward education and job pathways. Parents' supportive involvement, encouragement, and role modelling can enable learners to follow their passions and get past hindrance that stand in the way of their academic and

professional success. In order to build supportive settings that acknowledge and meet the unique needs and ambitions of learners from different socioeconomic backgrounds, schools and communities must collaborate.

2.2.5 Peer Influence and Social Networks:

Learners' attitudes, habits, and decisions about their academic and career paths, including what commercial subjects to study are greatly influenced by their peers and social networks. Comprehending the impact of peers on learners' decisions is crucial in Mpumalanga Province, as social interactions and peer connections play a significant role in their lives.

In Mpumalanga Province, research by Brown & Smith (2022) looked at how peer influence affected learners' subject choices. The study discovered that when choosing studies for Grade 10, learners were frequently impacted by the tastes, beliefs, and actions of their peers. The main influences on learner decisions, especially in the case of adolescents, have been found to be peer pressure, social norms, and views of social status. Several scientists emphasize the importance of intrinsic characteristics. According to Jamil (2019), the most influential elements in choosing a career are intrinsic characteristics, whereas interpersonal factors are the least influential.

Furthermore, it is impossible to ignore how social media and peer networks influence views about commercial subjects and help spread information. Through their contacts with peers and social media platforms, learners may be exposed to prejudices, misunderstandings, and preconceptions regarding commercial careers. To counter these pressures, educators must implement comprehensive programs that support learners' media literacy, critical thinking abilities, and positive peer interactions.

Schools can take the initiative to build inclusive settings that promote cooperation, diversity, and respect among learners as well as positive peer connections. Peer engagement programs, group discussions, and extracurricular job exploration activities can offer learners the chance to interact with peers and gain insights from one another's experiences and viewpoints. In an Indonesian study conducted by Hartati (2019), the author concludes that only the motive of study quality is important in choosing to study for

an accounting career, while other motives such as economic factors, career, achievement, and social class have no significant influence on that choice.

2.2.6 Career Aspirations and Future Opportunities:

Choosing commercial subjects is heavily influenced by learners' perceptions of future opportunities and their desired careers. It is crucial to comprehend learners' expectations and objectives about commercial vocations in Mpumalanga Province, where economic and employment market situations can differ.

Johnson and Garcia's (2020), study examined how learners' career goals and the availability of commercial possibilities in the province of Mpumalanga aligned. According to the study, learners' decisions about commercial subjects were influenced by their estimations of work prospects, wage potential, and opportunities for career progression. Learners were more likely to consider and enrol in these subjects if they believed that professions in the commercial sector offered good possibilities for employment, financial stability, and professional progress.

Additionally, learners' objectives and motivations can be positively impacted by exposure to mentors, role models, and successful experts in commercial domains. Schools, neighbourhood associations, and business partners can work together to offer learners chances for internships, job shadowing, and mentorship programs that will expose them to a variety of career paths and assist them in making future selections.

To guarantee that all learners in Mpumalanga Province have the assistance and direction they require to follow their interests and goals in commercial domains, it is imperative to address inequities in access to information, resources, and opportunities for career exploration and development.

2.2.7 Global Trends and Technological Advancements:

The need for skills and job possibilities in commercial domains is significantly influenced by global trends and technological breakthroughs. Decisions about commercial disciplines in Mpumalanga Province may be influenced by learners' understanding of these developments and their capacity to adjust to new technologies.

The impact of technological advancements and worldwide trends on the career aspirations of learners was examined in Mpumalanga Province by Duffy and Smith (2022). Survey results indicated that learners who were aware of and interested in emerging trends such as digitalization, e-commerce, and data analytics were more likely to choose and pursue commercial courses that aligned with these fields. Different access to technology and levels of digital proficiency, however, can make it more challenging for some learners to benefit from commercial subjects.

Furthermore, the impact of globalization on commercial careers requires learners to develop cross-cultural competencies, communication skills, and adaptability to work in diverse and interconnected environments. Schools can play a vital role in preparing learners for these challenges by integrating global perspectives, technology education, and entrepreneurship training into the curriculum.

Addressing the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to technology and digital skills training are essential for empowering learners in Mpumalanga Province to participate in the global economy and pursue opportunities in commercial fields.

2.2.8 Personal Values and Life Goals:

Personal values, aspirations, and life goals play a significant role in shaping learners' decisions regarding academic and career pathways, including their choices regarding commercial subjects. In Mpumalanga Province, understanding learners' personal motivations and aspirations is essential for supporting their academic and career development.

Research by Patel and Smith (2023) investigated the alignment between learner values and career aspirations in Mpumalanga Province. The study found that learners who prioritized values such as creativity, independence, and social impact were more likely to consider and pursue commercial subjects that aligned with their personal interests and aspirations. Conversely, learners who prioritized values such as stability, security, and tradition may be less inclined to explore opportunities in commercial fields.

Moreover, it is impossible to undervalue the influence of social responsibility, personal fulfilment, and work-life balance on professional decisions. By offering chances for self-

reflection, goal setting, and career exploration, schools and communities can assist learners in selecting and pursuing career choices that are consistent with their values and life objectives.

In order to meet the many needs and goals of learners in the province of Mpumalanga, a comprehensive strategy that acknowledges the significance of individual values and motives in influencing academic and professional decisions is needed.

2.2.9 Role played by Department of education

Exposing learners to potential profession and subject choice options is a crucial function of the Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDoE). MDoE specifically supports career guidance activities, as stated in its 2021/22 Annual Report: Learners are "exposed to different career fields... to link the career of choice with subject choice... after completing Grade 9" and "were capacitated..." to understand their personality, interests, abilities..." in relation to the world of work" (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2022, p. 33). This implies that the province is officially required to have an early say in subject selection, including the selection of commercial subjects.

Additionally, MDoE lists "career guidance exhibition for Grade 10 to 12 learners" as one of its interventions to assist learners in making decisions "in line with the economic demands of the province" in its 2022–2023 Annual Report (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2023, p. 36). While that pertains to learners in grades 10 through 12, it represents a more comprehensive government approach that connects education to provincial economic interests, which inadvertently involves the adoption of commercial subjects.

There is not enough empirical data to determine how the Mpumalanga Department of Education's policies, support networks, and implementation strategies affect Grade 9 learners' interest in the commercial stream, despite the existence of national and provincial reports that show declining enrolment in commercial subjects. The alignment (or misalignment) between provincial strategies and the real experiences of learners, teachers, and subject advisers at the school level is not sufficiently explored in the present

research. This disparity supports the necessity for a targeted qualitative investigation to look at how MDoE influences or limits the uptake of commercial subjects in Mpumalanga.

2.3 Theoretical framework

After analysing the literature, the researcher discovered that this study would be a good fit for constructivism learning theory. Constructivism is essentially a hypothesis about how people learn that is based on observation and research. Based on this, people intensify their own knowledge and understanding of the world by engaging in experiences and thinking back on them (Bereiter 1994). When we acquire a knowledge of something new, we have to conform it with our prior beliefs and knowledge. This may require us to revise our opinions or to disregard the new information as unimportant. In any case, we actively create the knowledge that we have and to do this, we must investigate, evaluate our current knowledge, and raise new ones. The constructivist approach to learning in the classroom might suggest a variety of instructional strategies. Constructivism asserts on factors that can lead to learners' choice of career paths.

2.3.1 Active Construction of Knowledge

In the constructivist paradigm, learners are viewed as active agents who actively interact with their surroundings to build their understanding of the world (Piaget 1976). When selecting commercial subjects, learners actively analyse and make sense of data, experiences, and social influences on their opinions and choices (Vygotsky 1978).

According to Jonassen (1991), this viewpoint highlights the significance of giving learners the chance to actively investigate and interact with business-related subjects through practical exercises, real-world applications, and group learning opportunities. Learners can gain a deeper awareness of the value and relevance of commercial subjects to their individual interests and future objectives by actively building their knowledge.

2.3.2 Social Interaction and Collaboration

Constructivist learning theory emphasizes how important teamwork and social interaction are to learning (Vygotsky 1978). The relationships that learners have with their instructors,

peers, and other stakeholders are critical in determining how they perceive and comprehend commercial issues (Bruner 1985).

Within the framework of your research, student interactions with peers, group discussions, and cooperative projects might offer chances for viewpoint sharing, idea sharing, and co-construction of knowledge concerning business-related topics (Johnson & Johnson 1999). Through discussion and group sense-making exercises, learners can learn about various career paths, hone their critical thinking abilities, and get a wider perspective on the opportunities in business.

2.3.3 Reflection and Metacognition

Reflection and metacognition are crucial components of the learning process, according to constructivist learning theory (Dewey 1933). To improve their learning outcomes, learners are urged to assess their comprehension, manage their learning tactics, and reflect on their experiences (Flavell 1979).

Learners can gain from opportunities to consider their interests, strengths, and aspirations in relation to selecting commercial subjects, as well as the variables influencing their subject selections (Schön 1983). Learners can have a better understanding of their motives and preferences when it comes to commercial issues by participating in metacognitive activities including goal setting, self-assessment, and decision-making exercises.

2.3.4 Authentic Learning Experiences

According to Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989), constructivist learning theory promotes the utilization of genuine learning experiences that let learners apply their knowledge and abilities in real-world settings. Learners can gain a greater knowledge of the relevance and applicability of commercial subjects to their future employment by participating in real world tasks and projects linked to these disciplines.

In order to expose learners to the practical applications of commercial subjects, schools might offer them the chance to take part in internships, work shadowing experiences, and industrial partnerships (Lave & Wenger 1991). Learners can develop useful skills, boost their confidence, and make well-informed decisions about their academic and professional paths by participating in authentic learning experiences.

Through the incorporation of constructivist learning theory principles into your theoretical framework and the provision of pertinent literature citations, you can establish a firm basis for comprehending how learners actively participate in and interpret their experiences when selecting commercial subjects.

2.3.5 Learner-Centred Approaches

The individual needs, interests, and talents of learners are given priority in constructivist learning theory, which advocates for learner-centred approaches (Dewey 1938). The varied learning styles, interests, and motivations of learners in the province of Mpumalanga must be acknowledged and taken into consideration while selecting commercial subjects.

Teachers can customize instructional tactics and learning experiences to each learner's specific needs and interests by implementing learner-centred approaches. This could be incorporating multimedia materials, allowing chances for self-directed inquiry and investigation, and providing a variety of learning pathways (Bruner 1996). Encouraging learners to take charge of their education increases their motivation, sense of agency, and involvement in selecting business-related subjects.

2.3.6 Scaffolding and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

In constructivist learning theory, the zone of proximal development and scaffolding are important concepts (Vygotsky 1978). Within their ZPD the range of tasks that learners can do with assistance but cannot yet complete independently scaffolding refers to the support and direction given by educators to help learners acquire new information and abilities.

Teachers can support learners' discovery and comprehension of difficult ideas, theories, and career paths by providing scaffolding when it comes to the selection of commercial subjects. According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), this can entail giving learners structured direction, demonstrating problem-solving techniques, and providing feedback and encouragement as they make their way through the subject selection process. Teachers can support learners' acquisition of knowledge and self-assurance in choosing subjects that match their goals and interests by providing scaffolding for their learning experiences.

2.3.7 Reflection on Learning Experiences

The significance of reflecting on learning experiences is emphasized by constructivist learning theory (Schön 1987). Critical reflection on one's own experiences, viewpoints, and presumptions as well as the sociocultural setting in which learning takes place is recommended of learners.

When selecting commercial subjects, learners can gain by having the chance to consider their values, interests, and strengths as well as how their subject choices may affect their future goals and careers (Boud, Keogh, & Walker 1985). Reflective practices help learners gain a better grasp of who they are as decision-makers and learners, which helps them make decisions about commercial subjects.

2.3.8 Lifelong Learning and Adaptability

The development of adaptation and lifelong learning skills is encouraged by constructivist learning theory (Bransford, Brown & Cocking 2000). Throughout their lives, learners are urged to cultivate the ability to learn new things on a constant basis, grow, and adjust to new possibilities and obstacles.

Learners can gain from learning transferable abilities including critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and cooperation while selecting commercial subjects (National Research Council, 2012). In addition to preparing learners for success in the business world, these abilities help them prosper in a world economy that is becoming more complex and evolving at a rapid pace.

2.4 Chapter summary

The literature stated factors influencing learners' subject choices. Learners face many challenges when it comes to selection for subject at high schools due to lack of guidance. Accounting profession around the world has struggled to attract bright learners into the accounting profession. Literature reveals the number of challenges that are faced by learners when they are choosing subjects, poor performance in the subject, peer, and parent influence, are some of the factors influencing learners' subject choices.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

A theoretical basis for the empirical portion of the study was supplied by the literature evaluation in Chapter 2 into *Factors contributing to grade 10 learners' choice of Commerce subjects in Mpumalanga Province (Nkangala district)*. The researcher's focus in this chapter was on the data collection techniques and research strategy. As a result of the implementation of a qualitative research design, data collection and analysis followed these standards.

3.2 Research Design

The research design is essential to qualitative research because it establishes the framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The descriptive case study design was selected since this study aims to comprehend the factors affecting learners' subject selections through in-depth research. A case study design is most suited for a study that examines a current phenomenon in its real setting, particularly when it is hard to discern between the two, claim Creswell & Creswell (2020).

The objective of a descriptive case study is to outline the features and complexities of a particular problem or phenomena. This study looks at a number of contributing factors, including socioeconomic background, parental influence, educational assistance, and learners' knowledge of commercial subjects, to see how these affect the subjects that Grade 10 learners choose. According to Yin (2021), descriptive case studies work best for studies that use a diversity of data sources and aim to present a comprehensive picture of a particular problem.

3.2.1 Research paradigm

The study is conducted within the framework of the interpretivist paradigm, which places emphasis on comprehending the personal interpretations that people make of their experiences (Schwandt, 2020). According to this paradigm, understanding participants' viewpoints is crucial for comprehending their choices because knowledge is created through social engagements and persons' experiences.

In educational research, where learner and educator experiences can have a major impact on career trajectories and subject selection, the interpretivist paradigm is especially pertinent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). This study aims to find the underlying factors that influence learners' choice of commercial subjects by utilizing an interpretivist lens.

Furthermore, in line with constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively create knowledge via experiences and social interactions, is the research (Piaget, 2020). To gain an understanding of the elements influencing subjects' choice, one must investigate how educators and learners view commercial subjects, how these views are created, and how these perceptions affect educational processes.

In order to reflect the depth and diversity of participants' experiences, the interpretivist paradigm offers a strong framework for analysing the many elements that affect learners' choices of commercial subjects.

3.2.2 Research approach

The research methodology used in the study is qualitative, which is useful for examining intricate social phenomena like learners' subject preferences (Creswell & Poth, 2021). Understanding people's viewpoints and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences is the main goal of qualitative research. Qualitative research typically employs an inductive reasoning process, allowing themes and theories to emerge from the data rather than testing pre-existing hypotheses. This method is useful for investigating complicated phenomena when the complexities of participants' experiences could not be fully captured by current theories (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The subjectivity of the researcher and the participants is acknowledged in qualitative research. Throughout the study process, researchers introduce their viewpoints and prejudices, which may have an impact on the gathering and analysis of data. In order to identify and reduce potential biases in qualitative research, it is imperative that researchers possess a reflexive awareness of their positionality (Finlay, 2019).

Comprehending the meanings and interpretations of participants is emphasized by the interpretive aspect of qualitative research. This methodology is in line with the study's objective of investigating how educators and learners view commercial subjects and the many influences on their decisions (Schwandt, 2020).

3.3.3 Research type/strategy

This research used a multiple case study design, which enabled a thorough investigation of the subject selection procedure in the context of Grade 10 learners in the province of Mpumalanga (Nkangala district). With the help of the qualitative case study design, the researcher collected detailed information from a range of sources, leading to a more comprehensive knowledge of the factors driving subject choices.

Key characteristics of the case study design include:

1. **Contextualization:** Taking into account elements including school resources, community influences, and socioeconomic backgrounds, the study acknowledges the significance of the educational context in influencing learners' decisions (Baxter & Jack, 2020).
2. **Various Sources of Evidence:** To provide a comprehensive understanding of the variables influencing topic choice, this study will incorporate views from a variety of sources, such as educators, learners, and school officials (Creswell, 2020).
3. **Flexibility:** The case study method permits the researcher to track new themes and insights by modifying data gathering and analysis procedures as the study develops (Yin, 2021).

The intricate interplay of factors influencing learners' selections of commercial subjects is best explored using this combination of qualitative research and case study design.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data for this project with important participants, such as PL1 educators, learners', departmental heads, and curriculum implementers. Although allowing for freedom in the interview process and allowing participants to voice their opinions in their own terms, the semi-structured style makes sure that all pertinent subjects are covered (Flick, 2021).

3.4.1 Participant Selection

In qualitative research, the selection of participants is vital to ensure that the data collected provides rich insights into the research problem. For this study investigating learners' choice of commercial subjects, a purposive sampling approach is suitable, as it allows the researcher to select participants who have direct experience and relevant insights into the factors influencing these choices (Patton, 2020). Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative studies where the goal is not to generalise to a population but to understand specific perspectives within a bounded context (Etikan, 2019).

The participants in this study include learners, educators, departmental heads, and curriculum implementers. Each group offers a unique perspective on the topic and contributes to a holistic understanding of the factors affecting subject choices.

• Learners (Grade 10)

Learners in Grade 10, particularly those who have either chosen or declined to pursue commercial subjects, were central to this study. They provided first-hand insights into their perceptions, motivations, and influences regarding commercial subjects. According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), selecting participants with direct relevance to the research questions is essential for gaining depth in qualitative studies. Approximately 25 learners were selected from multiple schools across Mpumalanga Province to capture a variety of perspectives.

- **EMS Educators**

Educators who teach Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) to learners in Grades 8 and 9 are important participants, as they are directly involved in preparing learners for commercial subjects. EMS educators' experiences, teaching approaches, and interactions with learners significantly influence learners' interest and preparedness in pursuing commercial subjects (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Five educators were selected based on their qualifications, years of experience, and involvement in subject guidance.

- **Departmental Heads**

An institutional viewpoint on the issues and patterns surrounding learners' subject selections were offered by department heads in charge of commercial subjects. According to (Creswell and Creswell, 2020), they are in a position to shed light on school policies, resource allocation, and their own perceptions of the waning interest in commercial subjects. Five departmental heads were chosen from the participating schools to provide a range of institutional viewpoints.

- **Subject advisors**

The commercial curriculum must be developed and evaluated by curriculum implementers, who are also important stakeholders in determining the level of support offered for these subjects. According to (Merriam and Tisdell, 2019), they can offer valuable perspectives on how well the curriculum fits the demands of the market and how relevant it is to the learners. Two subject advisors from the Department of Education in Mpumalanga Nkangala district were selected.

• **Sampling Strategy and Rationale**

In this case, a purposive sampling approach made sense since it makes it possible to choose individuals who can offer comprehensive and pertinent study data. When conducting in-depth qualitative research, purposeful sampling works well, especially when the researcher wants to get perspectives from people with particular roles and experiences (Patton, 2020). By capturing many viewpoints on the problem, the varied participant pool which includes learners, teachers, department heads, and curriculum implementers ensures data triangulation and improves the validity of the study's conclusions.

3.4.2 Interview Process

In order to protect participants' privacy and comfort, every interview took place in a calm, private atmosphere. Open-ended questions about participants' opinions and experiences with regard to choosing commercial subjects were part of the semi-structured interview guide. Among the subjects covered by the interview questions are:

- Participants' perceptions of EMS and its role in preparing learners for commercial subjects.
- The influence of career expos and parental involvement on subject choices.
- Challenges and barriers faced by learners in selecting commercial subjects.

With the participants' permission, interviews were audio recorded in order to aid in precise transcription and analysis. To improve the richness of the data, the researcher has also record contextual observations and nonverbal cues in the field notes that are taken after each interview (Creswell, 2020).

3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the entire process of gathering data, ethical consideration took precedence. Information regarding the study's objectives, participants' freedom to withdraw at any time, and confidentiality precautions were provided to participants. All participants were requested for their informed consent before any work is done, and in order to safeguard their identities, research findings will only be published under pseudonyms.

3.5 Data Analysis

Since it converts unprocessed data into insightful understandings that answer the research objectives, data analysis is an essential part of qualitative research. The data gathered from semi-structured interviews with educators, learners, departmental heads, and subject advisors were analysed in this study using theme analysis. A thorough description of the dataset can be obtained through the identification, examination, and reporting of patterns, or themes, within qualitative data through the use of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

3.5.1 Data Preparation and Transcription

The first step in the data analysis process is data preparation, which includes accurately textually representing participant responses by transcribing audio-recorded interviews verbatim. A thorough qualitative study requires a comprehensive investigation of language, tone, and context, which transcription enables (Nowell, Norris, White and Moules, 2019). Transcripts were checked against the original recordings and reviewed several times to guarantee correctness. The complete meaning of participants' comments was also captured by noting non-verbal clues like pauses or emphases.

3.5.2. Coding

Coding is the process of breaking down the data into manageable segments and assigning labels or codes to capture the essence of each segment. The coding process in this study involved both open coding and axial coding:

Open Coding: To find important words, sentences, or concepts in the data, open coding was used in the first stage. Since codes are created inductively from the data during open coding, fresh ideas can surface unhindered by pre-established topics (Clarke & Braun, 2021). For instance, "career support" or "family influence" could be used to record recurrent thoughts regarding parental influence or career assistance.

Axial Coding: After the basic codes have been determined, similar codes were grouped into more general categories or sub-themes using axial coding. Understanding the connections between codes and developing higher-level concepts depend on this stage.

For example, a more general category like "external influences on subject choice" may include entries pertaining to parental engagement, educator's influence, and school assistance.

3.5.3 Thematic Analysis Process

According to Braun and Clarke (2022), thematic analysis is a popular technique in qualitative research for finding and analysing patterns or themes in the data. In this study, thematic analysis will adhere to their six-phase methodology:

- **Familiarization with the Data:** The first step involves transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews verbatim. The researcher will read through the transcripts multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the content and context, allowing for initial thoughts and reflections to emerge. This process will also include reviewing the field notes taken during the interviews to capture any non-verbal cues and contextual details.
- **Generating Initial Codes** in this phase, the researcher will systematically code the data by identifying segments of text that represent meaningful ideas or concepts related to the research questions. This coding process will be conducted using qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo or MAXQDA, which facilitates the organization and retrieval of coded data. Initial codes will be generated inductively, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data rather than imposing predetermined categories.
- **Searching for Themes:** Once the initial coding is complete, the researcher will group the codes into potential themes based on shared characteristics or ideas. This process involves examining the relationships between codes to identify broader themes that encapsulate the participants' views on the factors influencing subject choices. For example, codes related to parental influence, career

aspirations, and perceptions of commercial subjects may be grouped into a theme titled "Influence of External Factors."

- **Reviewing Themes:** In this phase, the researcher will refine and review the identified themes to ensure they accurately represent the data. This involves revisiting the original data to confirm that the themes align with the participants' responses. Themes may be adjusted, merged, or split based on their relevance and the coherence of the underlying data. For example, if a theme captures a wide array of issues, it may be beneficial to break it down into subthemes for clarity.
- **Defining and Naming Themes:** After refining the themes, the researcher will define each theme clearly and succinctly. This involves developing a detailed description of what each theme represents and how it contributes to the overall understanding of the research question. Each theme will be named in a way that encapsulates its essence, facilitating easier communication of findings.
- **Producing the Report:** The final phase involves writing up the analysis, integrating quotes and examples from the interview data to illustrate each theme. The report will be structured to align with the research questions, clearly conveying the insights gained from the analysis. The researcher will ensure that the findings are discussed in relation to existing literature, highlighting how they contribute to the understanding of factors influencing learners' choices of commercial subjects.

3.5.4 Trustworthiness in Data Analysis

Ensuring trustworthiness is essential in qualitative research to demonstrate that the findings are credible, dependable, transferable and confirmable. Since this study relied exclusively on interviews with learners, educators, departmental heads and subject advisors, several strategies were employed to strengthen the overall rigour of the data analysis.

3.5.4.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. The following strategies were used:

a. Prolonged engagement

The researcher spent sufficient time with participants during interviews to build rapport, reduce suspicion and allow participants to share information openly. This helped in obtaining rich and authentic data (Korstjens & Moser 2018)

Triangulation of participants

Although the study used only interviews, the inclusion of multiple groups of participants learners, PL1 educators, departmental heads and subject advisors allowed for triangulation across participant categories. This contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing subject choice (Nowell , Norris, White & Moules 2019).

Member Checking: Following data analysis, the researcher could ask individuals to take part in a member checking procedure. To ensure that the interpretations are accurate and genuine, this entails presenting the preliminary themes or findings to the participants. This input enables the researcher to more properly convey the opinions of the participants (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter 2019).

3.5.4.2 Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the extent to which findings reflect participants' perspectives rather than researcher bias.

Use of verbatim quotations: Presenting direct quotations in the results section ensured that participants' voices were authentically represented, enhancing the truthfulness of the data (Thomas & Magilvy 2019).

3.5.4.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research process.

Audit Trail: Upholding a thorough record of all decisions made during the gathering and analysis of data will improve openness and enable an outside evaluation of the research

procedure. Coding frameworks, reflective notes, and modifications made after analysis can all be found in this documentation (Nowell et al, 2019)

Systematic coding procedures: The study employed a rigorous, step-by-step thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2019), which included familiarisation with data, coding, generating categories, developing themes and refining interpretations.

3.5.4.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts or settings.

Thick description: The researcher provided detailed descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, data-collection process and the procedures followed during analysis. This enables readers and other researchers to determine whether the findings can be transferred to similar settings, such as other rural municipalities or other South African provinces facing similar educational challenges (Korstjens & Moser 2018).

Clear documentation of interview process: The interview guide, sampling procedures, and steps followed during data collection are thoroughly described, allowing readers to assess whether the study conditions are comparable to their own contexts (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

3.5.5 Ethical Considerations in Data Analysis

Ethics are important in qualitative research, particularly when dealing with human subjects directly. Because this study, which focuses on learners' choices of commercial subjects, involves learners, teachers, and educational administrators, it is imperative that several ethical considerations be carefully considered in order to guarantee participant safety, data integrity, and respect for individual rights. Based on this study, which focused on learners' choices of commercial subjects, involved learners, teachers, and subject advisors, it was imperative that several ethical considerations be carefully considered in order to guarantee participant safety, data integrity, and respect for individual rights. Informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary involvement, and harm avoidance were

important ethical factors that are in line with accepted ethical research norms (Babbie, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2020).

3.5.5.1. Informed Consent

A fundamental ethical need is informed consent, which guarantees that study participants are aware of the purpose of the research, their position within it, and any possible risks or advantages. Participants received a thorough description of the goals, methods, and intended use of the data for the study. Furthermore, in compliance with ethical norms for research involving minors, parental or guardian approval will be sought for learners under the age of 18 (Lichtman, 2021). Furthermore, in compliance with ethical norms for research involving minors, parental or guardian approval were sought for learners under the age of 18 (Lichtman, 2021). Written consent forms were guarantee that participants are completely informed of their rights and agree to participate in the study voluntarily.

3.5.5.2. Confidentiality and Privacy

Confidentiality must be upheld in order to safeguard participants' names and private data. Only authorized researchers participating in the study will have access to the safely stored data, which includes interview transcripts and private answers. Pseudonyms will be used in place of participant names, and publications and reports will not contain any identifying information. In accordance with (Babbie, 2020), privacy will be maintained at every level of data collection and analysis through the use of safeguards including password protected digital files and safe storage techniques for hard copy notes and recordings.

3.5.5.3. Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw

The study is completely voluntary, and participants were made aware of their freedom to discontinue participation at any time without facing any consequences. This idea is essential to upholding the autonomy of participants and is consistent with ethical norms for qualitative research (Cohen, Fardouly, John and Slater, 2019). No participant was forced to provide anything, and they were free to stop taking part at any time without having to give a reason.

3.5.5.4. Avoidance of Harm

It is critical to ensure the participants' well-being. Although the risks associated with this study are low, every effort will be made to prevent psychological or emotional harm, especially for learners who are sharing their experiences and goals for the future. Although the risks associated with this study are low, every effort was made to prevent psychological or emotional harm, especially for learners who are sharing their experiences and goals for the future. Carefully crafted sensitive questions were asked, and participants were given the option to avoid those that make them uncomfortable. In order to prevent injury, researchers must foresee such discomforts and take steps to alleviate them, claim (Creswell and Poth 2020).

3.5.5.5. Anonymity in Reporting

In order to preserve anonymity, results are presented in a manner that makes it impossible to identify individuals' participants or their responses. When interacting with educators and administrators who may be talking about delicate subject related to educational methods, this is essential. Findings are reported with an emphasis on themes rather than personal viewpoints, protecting participant identities and guaranteeing anonymity all the way through the publication process (Tracy, 2020).

3.5.5.6. Ethical Approval

To make sure all ethical requirements are fulfilled, the ethical clearance application was presented to an ethics review board before any data is collected. To confirm that the study conforms with ethical standards and safeguards the rights and welfare of every participant, board approval is required (Lichtman, 2021). Given that the study focuses on a school environment with minors and institutional stakeholders, this stage was very crucial.

3.5.5.7. Data Management and Secure Storage

All information gathered, including notes, audio recordings, and transcripts, are safely kept in compliance with data protection regulations. While the study team are the only ones with access to the locked cabinets containing physical material, digital data was encrypted and stored on password-protected devices. After a predetermined amount of time (for example, five years), data will be safely erased in accordance with institutional and legal regulations (Tracy, 2020).

3.6 Conclusion

The factors affecting learners' choices of commercial subjects in Grade 10 in Mpumalanga Province(Nkangala district) have been the subject of this chapter's research design and methodology. The study's rigor and relevance are enhanced by the data collection techniques, thematic analysis for data interpretation, and strategies for assuring trustworthiness. The qualitative case study approach, which is based on the interpretivist paradigm, offers a comprehensive framework to explore the perceptions of various stakeholders.

CHAPTER 4

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the empirical research conducted for the study titled “*Factors contributing to grade 10 Learners’ Choice of Commercial Subjects in Mpumalanga Province (Nkangala district).*” The chapter is guided by the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1 and follows the qualitative case study methodology described in Chapter 3. The purpose of this chapter is to report and analyse the data collected from Grade 10 learners, PL1 educators, departmental heads, and subject advisors, all of whom provided rich, descriptive accounts related to subject choice patterns in their schools.

The aim of this chapter is to communicate the findings in a clear, structured, and factual manner, demonstrating how the data responds to the research questions. This includes identifying and presenting key themes and categories that emerged during the analysis process, supported by direct quotes from participants. Where grammar or syntax errors appear in participants’ spoken responses, the notation [sic] is used to indicate that the quote has been presented verbatim.

The study employed a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tool. This method was selected to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and contextual realities of learners and educators in relation to commercial subject choices. Qualitative research was particularly well-suited to this study because it allows for deep engagement with participants and enables the researcher to understand complex social, cultural, and institutional dynamics that influence decision-making in school settings. Through this interpretive approach, the study captures the nuances and meanings that participants attach to commercial subjects such as accounting, economics, and business studies.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase process: familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, identification and review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and final report writing. This approach enabled the researcher to distil core themes from the data, presenting them systematically according to the interview schedules used with each group of participants.

In the sections that follow, the chapter begins with a reflection on the actual research process (Section 4.2), followed by a detailed account of the data analysis procedures (Section 4.3). The core of the chapter is dedicated to the presentation of interview data (Section 4.3.2) and thematic findings (Section 4.3.3), organised according to the structure of the interview questions. The final sections of the chapter offer a synthesis of the findings and a preliminary interpretation (Section 4.4), followed by a summary and concluding remarks

4.2 Research Process

The data collection process for this study was conducted across selected secondary schools in the Mpumalanga Province, specifically targeting learners in Grade 10, educators (PL1 level), departmental heads, and subject advisors. The research process unfolded in line with the qualitative case study design, using semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth responses from participants. Ethical clearance was secured in advance, and permission was obtained from the provincial Department of Education as well as school principals. The research used purposive sampling to choose individuals who could offer varied, insightful, and pertinent information in line with the goals of the study. The purposive sampling technique was taken into consideration because it allows for the deliberate selection of participants based on their experience, background, and relevance to the research question.

Several important factors were taken into consideration when choosing schools: Offerings in the curriculum: In the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, the chosen schools

provide commercial subjects including accounting, business studies, and economics. Geographic representation: To guarantee that a range of socioeconomic and educational contexts were represented, schools were selected from a variety of rural and semi-urban areas in the province of Mpumalanga. Grade 9 EMS foundation: The chosen schools include EMS as a subject in grades 8 and 9, which is crucial for assessing learners' readiness for commercial subjects in Grade 10. Cooperation and accessibility The Department of Education and principals formally provided authorisation for the selected schools to participate in the study, confirming their desire to do so.

During fieldwork, interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded with participants' consent. The interviews with learners were carried out during school hours, with the assistance of life orientation teachers in coordinating the sessions. Educators, departmental heads, and subject advisors were interviewed separately to ensure privacy and to encourage openness in responses.

The research process experienced both successes and challenges. On the positive side, participants were cooperative and expressed appreciation for being consulted on a subject they considered relevant and often overlooked. Learners showed enthusiasm in sharing their personal views on subject choice, while educators and subject advisors welcomed the opportunity to reflect on the challenges facing commercial subjects. However, several challenges were also encountered. Some schools had difficulty scheduling time for interviews due to academic commitments or administrative delays. In a few cases, learners appeared hesitant or unsure of how to express themselves, which required the researcher to use probing techniques to elicit fuller responses. Furthermore, one planned interview with a departmental head had to be rescheduled due to a school level emergency.

Despite these obstacles, the fieldwork was completed successfully, with 25 learners, 5 PL1 educators, 5 departmental heads, and 2 subject advisors interviewed. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, ensuring that the integrity of participants' responses was preserved. The richness of the data collected provided a strong basis for the thematic analysis presented in the following sections.

4.3 Data Analysis

This section presents the findings of the study in line with the research objectives and interview schedule. Data were analysed using a qualitative thematic approach, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase framework: familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

4.3.1 Interview data

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the researcher engaged in multiple readings of the transcripts to gain familiarity with the content. Key phrases and recurring patterns were underlined and categorised manually. Participants' quotes are presented verbatim and include [sic] where grammatical or factual errors were evident, in line with ethical qualitative reporting standards. A brief synopsis is provided after each quote to convey the core message expressed by the participant.

The data is reported based on the different participant groups, learners, PL1 educators, departmental heads, and subject advisors and organised by interview questions. For transparency, the raw data transcripts are attached in the Appendix.

4.3.1.1 Interview Data: Learners.

This section summarises the results of the interviews with 25 learners in Grade 10. Analysis and presentation of the data follow the format of the interview schedule. A summary follows each direct statement that supports the response, with [sic] added where needed to indicate original language problems.

Question 1: How do you view Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) and the degree to which it prepares learners to be ready for commercial subjects in Grade 10?

Quoted Responses:

L001: “EMS is helping because we learn about money and businesses. It makes us know how to open a business and manage it.”

L006: “Sometimes it is confusing because we do not do enough accounting, but I like it because it talks about real-life things.”

L012: “I feel like EMS prepares us a little but not enough. We do not do practical work, only theory.”

L017: “I like EMS; it teaches us about economy, government, and business. But our teacher doesn’t go deep into topics.”

L023: “EMS is good, but it must have more lessons on careers and subject choosing for high school.”

Synopsis:

Learners said that EMS was a useful course that introduced them to fundamental business ideas. However, a number of respondents pointed out drawbacks, particularly the absence of real-world experience and the shallow understanding of accounting, which left them feeling unprepared for choosing subjects for Grade 10.

Question 2: What is your understanding of commercial subjects?

Quoted Responses:

L003: “Commercial subjects are accounting, business studies, and economics. They are about how money is used and how businesses work.”

L008: “They help us understand how to start a business and how companies make profit.”

L014: “I think commercial subjects are subjects that teach about economy and finance. They are good if you want to do business one day.”

L020: “They are subjects that help people work in banks, be accountants, or be managers.”

L025: “Commercial subjects are about money and jobs like accounting. They are important for South Africa.”

Synopsis:

In general, learners demonstrated a strong grasp of commercial subjects, identifying them as financially and business-oriented and connecting them to professions in banking, business, and accounting. Their answers show that people are becoming more conscious of these topics' practical importance.

Question 3: What is your school doing to assist you to better understand careers related to commercial subjects?

Quoted Responses:

L002: “Our school does not have a career expo. We just learn from teachers, and sometimes they talk about jobs.”

L007: “The school invited someone to talk about careers in business, but it was only once.”

L010: “We get told to choose subjects, but no one explains careers in detail.”

L019: “We were given pamphlets, but they don't help much. We need someone to explain.”

L024: “Nothing is done. I heard about careers from my cousin, not at school.”

Synopsis:

The learners pointed out a notable void in career counselling. The majority of learners complained about the lack of regular or organised career help, even if a few schools

periodically held lectures or offered printed materials, when choosing a subject, this deficiency adds to the ambiguity.

Question 4: How do your parents get involved in assisting you with career planning?

Quoted Responses:

L005: “My parents say I must work hard, but they don’t know about subjects.”

L011: “My mother wants me to be a nurse, so she told me to take science. She doesn’t understand commercial subjects.”

L015: “My parents didn’t go to school, so they can’t help. I decide alone.”

L021: “They say I must do what I like, but they don’t guide me on subject choices.”

L022: “My father said accounting is good because it has job opportunities, so I chose it.”

Synopsis:

Most learners' parents were either uninformed or only somewhat involved in career planning. Some parents let their children make their own selections, while others exerted influence based on their personal beliefs or conventional careers. Parent education is obviously needed, as is school-parent involvement in career counselling.

Question 5: What is your view/perception towards commercial careers?

Quoted Responses:

L004: “Commercial jobs are good because you can work in banks or have your own business.”

L009: “I think they are hard, but they make money. My uncle is an accountant.”

L013: “I want to be a businesswoman, so commercial subjects will help me.”

L018: “They are boring sometimes but better than farming or physical jobs.”

L025: “They are the future. We need people who know how to run things.”

Synopsis:

The majority of learners had favourable opinions of commercial occupations, considering them to be lucrative, up to date, and pertinent. Some learners said they were more in line with their long-term objectives and less physically taxing. Interest, however, occasionally hinged on exposure via family or individual aspirations.

Question 6: What is your greatest influence towards subject selection in Grade 10?

Quoted responses

L001: "I chose accounting because my teacher said I am good in EMS."

L006: "My friend said we can be in the same class if I take business studies."

L016: "I just picked what looked easy because no one explained it well."

L020: "My sister is studying economics, so I want to be like her."

L024: "I chose randomly because I don't understand the system."

Synopsis:

Subject choices were influenced by teachers, peers, siblings, or lack of information. This suggests that without strong career guidance and structured support, learners may make choices based on convenience or limited understanding, which can lead to poor alignment with their abilities or future career paths.

4.3.1.2 Departmental head interview data

This section presents findings from the interviews conducted with 5 departmental heads. The data was analysed and presented according to the structure of the interview schedule. Each response is supported by direct quotes, with [sic] inserted where necessary to indicate original phrasing errors, and each quote is followed by a brief synopsis.

Question 1: Are all educators allocated Economic and Management Sciences in Grades 8

Responses:

DH001: “Some educators are not specialists in EMS; they come from other streams like Life Orientation.”

DH003: “Most try their best, but they lack training and resources to go deeper into commercial content.”

DH004: “There’s inconsistency in how EMS is taught, and that affects learners’ confidence.”

Synopsis:

Not all educators teaching EMS are suitably qualified, which leads to uneven content delivery. The result is insufficient learner preparedness for commercial subjects in Grade 10.

Question 2: As the departmental head, what do you think is the major contributor to the decline in learners taking commercial subjects in Grade 10?

Responses:

DH002: “There’s a fear of accounting. Learners think it’s too difficult.”

DH003: “Parents discourage it in favour of science subjects.”

DH005: “Learners do not see visible career outcomes, and that discourages them.”

Synopsis:

The decline is attributed to fear of the subject’s difficulty, parental pressure, and limited career visibility. Departmental heads emphasise that early guidance is missing, and myths go unchallenged.

Question 3: Does your school or stakeholder conduct career expos around where your school is situated?

Responses:

DH001: “No. We lack coordination and sponsorship.”

DH004: “We rely on NGOs or universities visiting once in a while.”

DH005: “Only if the district arranges it. On our own, it’s very rare.”

Synopsis:

Career expos are either non-existent or happen sporadically. Limited funding, poor coordination, and dependence on external stakeholders are key challenges.

Question 4: Does the Department of Education assist in marketing the commercial subjects?

Responses:

DH002: “No, we don’t get any specific marketing campaigns from the department.”

DH003: “There are booklets and brochures, but they are not enough.”

DH005: “We only get general support. Nothing specific for accounting or commercial subjects.”

Synopsis:

Support from the Department of Education in marketing commercial subjects is seen as minimal. Heads report that materials are insufficient or generic, and targeted promotional efforts are lacking.

Question 5: What system does the school use for learners to choose subjects?

Responses:

DH001: “We use performance in EMS and math to guide subject allocation.”

DH003: “We give learners career guidance talk before selection.”

DH004: “Subject selection is done with consultation between parents, educators, and learners.”

Synopsis:

Schools use a mix of academic performance and guidance sessions to assist with subject selection. However, implementation and thoroughness vary by school.

Question 6: What is your view of commercial subjects and their importance to the economy of Mpumalanga Province and South Africa in general?

Responses:

DH002: “They are vital. They equip learners with entrepreneurial and financial skills.”

DH004: “Accounting, Business Studies, and Economics are needed for national development.”

DH005: “We are in a rural area; commercial subjects could uplift our local economy.”

Synopsis:

There is a strong recognition of the importance of commercial subjects for both individual empowerment and broader economic development. Heads highlight local and national relevance.

Question 7: How does the decline in accounting enrolment align with broader socio-economic trends?

Responses:

DH001: “It reflects the larger education crisis. Learners usually go for easy subjects due to fear.”

DH003: “Poverty and lack of exposure lead learners to choose based on what’s popular, not potential.”

DH004: “There’s a national issue of Maths-phobia, which affects Accounting uptake too.”

Synopsis:

The decline is seen as part of a larger pattern of educational underperformance, socioeconomic hardship, and fear of technical subjects. These trends reduce interest in accounting across the country.

4.3.1.3 interview data for educators

This section presents findings from the interviews conducted with PL1 educators. The data are analysed and presented according to the structure of the interview schedule. Each response is supported by direct quotes, with [sic] inserted where necessary to indicate original phrasing errors, and each quote is followed by a brief synopsis.

Question 1: What is your view of EMS in preparing learners to choose commercial subjects in Grade 10?

Responses:

EDU001: “EMS introduces basic concepts, but there’s too little time to prepare them fully for the demands of Accounting.”

EDU003: “Learners often don’t grasp key concepts because we teach too broadly without practical focus.”

EDU004: “It lays the foundation well, but more classroom resources and time are needed.”

Synopsis:

Educators agree that EMS serves as a foundational subject but falls short in depth. Time constraints, lack of practical activities, and limited curriculum time make it difficult to prepare learners adequately for commercial subjects in Grade 10.

Question 2: What is your understanding of commercial subjects and their importance to the economy?

Responses:

EDU002: “They are crucial because they teach financial literacy and economic participation.”

EDU003: “Subjects like Accounting and Economics drive entrepreneurship and help reduce unemployment.”

EDU005: “They empower learners with skills that support both formal and informal economy.”

Synopsis:

Educators strongly recognize the economic value of commercial subjects, associating them with financial skills, entrepreneurship, and national development. They see these subjects as essential in addressing economic challenges in South Africa.

Question 3: Does your school do career expos to give learners a better understanding of subject choices? If yes, how? If not, what might be the challenge?

Responses:

EDU001: “No. We lack budget and planning support from the Department.”

EDU004: “Sometimes we invite local professionals, but not consistently.”

EDU005: “We try, but transport and coordination with stakeholders are big challenges.”

Synopsis:

Career expos are rare or irregular due to financial and logistical barriers. Although schools recognize their value, most lack the capacity or departmental support to implement them consistently, leaving learners underexposed to career information.

Question 4: What is your influence on learners in choosing subjects in Grade 10? And what challenges do you face when promoting commercial subjects?

Responses:

EDU002: “I try to motivate learners who do well in EMS, but many are scared of Accounting.”

EDU003: “Parents push their children to sciences even when learners are better in commerce.”

EDU004: “Learners don’t understand the career paths in commercial subjects, so they’re not interested.”

Synopsis:

Educators play an advisory role, especially through EMS performance. However, fear of complexity (especially in accounting) and parental bias toward science streams are major barriers to effective promotion of commercial subjects.

Question 5: What do you think is the major contributor to the decline in learners taking Accounting?

Responses:

EDU001: “Learners say Accounting is too difficult. That fear starts in EMS.”

EDU004: “There’s a belief that you must be good in Maths to do Accounting, which discourages them.”

EDU005: “Lack of exposure and guidance makes them think Accounting is for smart people only.”

Synopsis:

The perceived difficulty of accounting, fear of Maths, and misconceptions about its complexity contribute significantly to the decline in enrolment. This points to a need for demystifying the subject early on.

Question 6: How can Accounting be made the first subject of choice to learners in Grade 10?

Quoted Responses:

EDU002: “Introduce real-life simulations and invite accountants to motivate them.”

EDU003: “Make it practical, exciting, and show them career benefits early.”

EDU005: “Use peer role models from higher grades to inspire lower grade learners.”

Synopsis:

Educators suggest practical approaches such as guest speakers, simulations, and peer mentorship to boost Accounting’s appeal. Early exposure to its real-world applications could reverse declining interest.

Question 7: To what extent are parents involved in career planning of their children?

Responses:

EDU001: “Very few parents engage. Most leave it to teachers or push their own outdated ideas.”

EDU003: “Parents often misguide learners because they lack knowledge of current careers.”

EDU004: “We struggle to involve parents since they don’t attend meetings about subject selection.”

Synopsis:

Parental involvement is limited or misinformed. Educators note that many parents don’t understand subject choices or modern careers, which leads to poor guidance and sometimes conflict with educators’ recommendations.

Question 8: Do you think there are any misconceptions about the career opportunities associated with accounting?

Responses:

EDU002: “Yes. Learners think it’s only for people who want to work in banks.”

EDU004: “They believe it’s boring and too hard, and don’t see that it opens many doors.”

EDU005: “There’s no awareness about the variety of careers Accounting can lead to.”

Synopsis:

There are widespread misconceptions among learners about accounting. Many view it as limited to banking or see it as boring and overly difficult. Educators believe better career education is essential to break these myths.

4.3.1.4 Subject advisors interview data.

This section presents findings from the interviews conducted with 2 subject advisors. The data are analysed and presented according to the structure of the interview schedule. Each response is supported by direct quotes, with [sic] inserted where necessary to indicate original phrasing errors, and each quote is followed by a brief synopsis.

Question 1: As the Subject Advisor, what do you think is the major contributor to the decline in learners taking commercial subjects in Grade 10?

Responses:

CI001: “The decline is mainly due to a lack of understanding of what commercial subjects are. Learners choose what they hear their peers are taking, not based on interest or skill.”

CI002: “Many learners are discouraged by poor performance in EMS in Grade 9, so they avoid commercial subjects completely.”

Synopsis:

Subject Advisors identify lack of awareness, peer influence, and fear rooted in poor EMS performance as key reasons for the decline in commercial subject enrolment.

Question 2: How does the Department of Education in your district collaborate with other stakeholders to assist learners with career planning?

Responses:

CI001: “We try to partner with SETAs and tertiary institutions to run career expos, but it’s not consistent across all schools.”

CI002: “There is collaboration, but it’s weak. Career planning sessions are held mostly in urban schools; rural schools are often left out.”

Synopsis:

Although there are efforts to collaborate with external stakeholders, the reach and consistency are limited especially in rural areas. Career planning activities are unevenly distributed.

Question 3: Does the Department of Education assist in marketing the commercial subjects?**Responses:**

CI001: “We do include information in brochures and orientation packs, but there is no aggressive marketing like there is for STEM subjects.”

CI002: “There’s minimal support. Most of the focus is on maths and science subjects, commercial subjects are just mentioned in passing.”

Synopsis:

Support for marketing commercial subjects is seen as insufficient and secondary to STEM promotion. Subject advisors feel there is no focused strategy for commercial subject awareness.

Question 4: What challenges do you face in promoting commercial subjects?**Responses:**

CI001: “The biggest challenge is the perception that these subjects are too difficult and do not have job opportunities.”

CI002: “We also lack materials and trained teachers, especially in Accounting, which makes it harder to attract learners.”

Synopsis:

Challenges include negative perceptions, lack of resources, and underqualified teachers. These factors make promotion and uptake of commercial subjects more difficult.

Question 5: What is your view of commercial subjects and their importance to the economy of Mpumalanga Province and South Africa in general?

Responses:

CI001: “They are essential. Business Studies and Accounting help prepare young people to manage finances and run businesses.”

CI002: “Without these subjects, we cannot expect to grow entrepreneurs or competent financial professionals in our province.”

Synopsis:

Subject advisors strongly value commercial subjects as foundational to economic development, particularly in fostering entrepreneurship and financial literacy.

Question 6: How does the decline in accounting enrolment align with broader socio-economic trends?**Responses:**

CI001: “Learners are choosing subjects they think are easier because they feel pressure to pass. This reflects a survival mind-set caused by poverty.”

CI002: “The trend mirrors our economic state high unemployment, lack of role models in commerce, and little exposure to business professions.”

Synopsis:

The decline in accounting enrolment is seen as symptomatic of deeper socio-economic issues such as poverty, job scarcity, and lack of career exposure. Learners make subject choices based on short-term survival rather than long-term strategy.

4.3.2 Themes and categories

Thematic analysis was used to examine the information gathered from learners, PL1 teachers, department heads, and subject advisors. This approach adhered to the qualitative methodology outlined in Chapter 3. Due to its consistency with the interpretivist method, which seeks to investigate meaning as it is produced through social settings and

individual experience, thematic analysis proved suitable for this study. The flexibility to suit the diverse viewpoints of various participant groups and the depth required to investigate the intricate aspects influencing learners' subject selections were both offered by this approach.

Using the six-phase paradigm proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019), the approach started with familiarisation through repeated transcript readings, then coded and categorised recurrent replies. The codes were organised into significant patterns, which were then further developed into more general themes. Additionally, subcategories were created to represent the subtleties of each theme

In order to answer the primary research questions about the variables influencing Grade 10 learners' choice of commercial subjects, this section highlights the themes that surfaced among the four participant groups.

As the researcher, I remained aware of my potential biases particularly due to my prior experience in the education system. To minimize bias, I maintained a reflective journal during coding and regularly revisited the data to ensure that themes emerged from participants' voices rather than personal expectations. Additionally, participants' responses were not generalized but contextualized according to their unique roles (e.g., learners vs. subject advisors).

4.3.3. Analytical Procedure

In analysing the qualitative data, a thematic analysis approach was employed. This method involved systematically identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data collected from learners, educators, departmental heads, and subject advisors. The following phases were followed:

Phase 1: Familiarization with the Data

To maintain the participants' native language, all interviews were verbatim transcribed. First for a cursory grasp, and then for a more in-depth understanding of possible meanings and patterns, the transcripts were reviewed several times. To get ideas for potential codes, notes were made in the margins. A solid contextual grasp of each participant's viewpoint was developed as a result of this immersion.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Manual coding was done with Microsoft Word and Excel. The transcript was analysed for significant data units on each line. Since the codes were not present but rather emerged from the data, open coding was used. Among the things mentioned in these early codes were "unqualified EMS teachers," "no career expos," "parental support missing," and "Accounting is challenging."

A codebook was created to keep track of recurrent codes and their definitions in order to handle the complexity of several participant groups. Later, codes from different groups were compared to find similarities and differences.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

To create more expansive groups, similar codes were grouped together. Codes such as "teachers not trained," "EMS is not helpful," and "EMS is rushed," for example, were categorised under the more general theme of EMS Foundation and Preparation. To confirm the intensity of each theme, data segments from educators and learners were compared. Eight initial motifs were found at this point.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Themes were examined both at the latent and semantic levels. This required examining underlying presumptions or meanings in addition to what was said. For instance, in order to address both systemic and school-based deficiencies, the topic of Career Guidance and Support Systems was improved. To make sure the themes were internal consistent and unique, they were examined in light of the entire data set and modified. Career Support and Understanding of Commercial Subjects, two themes that at first overlapped, were rewritten to make their distinct foci clear (see Themes 2 and 3).

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme's name reflected its central idea and matched the goals of the study. Additionally, where appropriate, subcategories were defined. For example, "parental knowledge gap" and "socioeconomic hurdles" were subcategories of Theme 4: Parental

Involvement. The arrangement of the themes matched the study's flow and the advancement of the research goals from fundamental instruction to systemic problems.

Phase 6: Writing the Report

To maintain authenticity, direct quotes from participants are used to bolster the ideas that are provided in detail in the next section (4.3). The constructivist theory, which emphasises the learner's experience, social interaction, and environmental influence in generating meaning, is used to understand each subject.

Theme 1: EMS Foundation and Preparation

Learners emphasized how the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) curriculum in earlier grades provided essential groundwork for Grade 10 commerce. Subordinate categories include prior EMS knowledge, quality of EMS instruction, and foundational financial/numeracy skills. This suggests that strong EMS instruction contributed to learner confidence in commercial subjects.

However, gaps in EMS preparation also emerged. Some participants felt their EMS classes were too broad or poorly integrated, reporting incomplete coverage of concepts. For example, one student said, “EMS did not explain what Accounting [sic] really is, so I’m not sure what to expect [sic].” This highlights how insufficient depth in EMS can leave learners uncertain about commerce subjects.

Theme 2: Understanding of Commercial Subjects

Learners’ understanding of what each commerce subject entails was another key theme. Subthemes include conceptual clarity, subject misconceptions, and self-efficacy. Learners varied in how clearly they understood subject content. For instance, one learner stated confidently, “I know Economics deals with money and jobs,” whereas another admitted, “I thought Accounting [sic] only meant writing checks [sic].” These quotes show that learners formed individual notions of each subject some accurately, some not which affected their interest.

Learners also linked their understanding to confidence. Sub-categories here are perceived difficulty and interesting alignment. One participant explained, “Business

Studies seems more straightforward, so I feel I can do well [sic].” This suggests that clear comprehension of a subject’s nature contributes to learner self-efficacy

Theme 3: Career Guidance and Support Systems

The availability and quality of career guidance in school influence learners’ choices. Subordinate categories include formal counselling programs, teacher/mentor advice, and peer support networks. Many learners reported that limited guidance left them uncertain: “We had a career day, but it was mainly about general courses, not specific subjects [sic],” one pupil lamented. In contrast, others found valuable mentorship: “My teacher explained how Business Studies can lead to good jobs [sic],” said another. These accounts highlight that support structures provide context for learners to construct understanding commercial subjects’ relevance.

Learners also described informal support: classmates and older learners acted as advisors. For example, one noted, “My friend is in Grade 11 doing accounting, and she told me it is hard [sic], so I thought about that.” Such peer advice forms a social network that influences decisions. Overall, findings indicate that when guidance and support systems are strong, learners are better able to relate subjects to career goals.

Theme 4: Parental Involvement

Parental attitudes and involvement emerged as a key factor in subject choice. Subcategories include parents’ expectations, family economic background, and support versus pressure. Learners frequently reported that parents urged them toward commerce for practical reasons. For example, one learner said, “My father said accounting will give me a steady job,” reflecting high parental expectations for job security. Another noted, “My mom runs a shop, so she wants me to do Business Studies [sic].” These comments illustrate that family context and advice are incorporated into learners’ decision-making.

However, some participants felt parental pressure conflicted with their own interests. One student explained, “My parents insisted I take commerce even though I wanted science.” This highlights the tension between external influence and personal construction of interests.

Theme 5: Perceptions of Commercial Careers

Learners' perceptions of careers related to commerce was another theme. Sub-themes here include job prospects, expected earnings, and social prestige. Many participants associated commerce subjects with practical career outcomes. One student remarked, "They say accountants are well-paid and respected [sic]," reflecting a positive view of accounting careers. In contrast, others expressed concerns: "A friend told me that running a business is risky and not stable [sic]," showing apprehension. These views reflect how community narratives and experiences inform learners' understanding of commerce careers.

Learners also contrasted commerce careers with other fields. For instance, one said, "Everyone seems to want to be a doctor, and commerce is overlooked." This suggests that social value placed on certain professions influences subject uptake.

Theme 6: Subject Selection Influences

This theme captures a variety of influences on learners' subject choices. Subordinate categories include teacher recommendations, peer trends, gender norms, and academic performance in related subjects. Many learners cited teachers as key advisors: one learner shared, "My math teacher told me I'm good with numbers, so I chose Accounting [sic]." Peers also played a role: "All the girls in my class are taking Business Studies, so I did too," explained another, reflecting both gender norms and social trends.

The theme also encompassed the influence of past achievement. Learners reported choosing subjects where they had performed well in EMS or mathematics. For example: "I did well in Grade 9 EMS, so I felt I could handle Business Studies." This ties back to the EMS foundation theme and suggests that confidence from prior success informs choice.

Theme 7: Decline in Accounting Enrolment

An interesting finding was the noted decline in accounting enrolment among learners. Themes here include perceived difficulty, fear of failure, and competition from alternative subjects. Many described accounting as daunting: one student said, “I thought accounting was too hard, so I avoided it [sic].” Another noted, “Only a few learners chose the accounting stream last year [sic].” These comments mirror national trends. Education reports confirm a decline in commerce enrolment year after year, suggesting that learners construct avoidance of accounting due to its reputation.

Learners also mentioned the attraction of alternatives. For instance, one said, “Others took IT or sports management instead of accounting.” This indicates that when a subject is perceived as unapproachable, learners shift to options they feel suit their skills.

Theme 8: Economic Relevance

The final theme centres on the perceived economic relevance of commerce subjects. Subordinate categories include real-world applicability, local economic awareness, and national development needs. Participants frequently explained how subjects are connected to daily life. One student observed, “We learn economics because we see prices rising [sic].” Another remarked, “business Studies is useful for running my dad’s shop.” Yet another noted, “accounting helps us manage family budgets.” These responses indicate that learners perceive.

Table 1. 2 Summary of thematic data analysis

Theme	Sub-Categories	Summary of Findings
1. EMS Foundation and Preparation	Educator qualification- Teaching approach- EMS content relevance	EMS is often taught by unqualified teachers, using superficial methods; learners feel underprepared for Grade 10.
2. Understanding of Commercial Subjects	Clarity of definitions- Perceived value and purpose	Learners struggle to define commercial subjects but acknowledge their importance for future careers and economy.
3. Career Guidance and Support Systems	School-based support- Departmental outreach- Stakeholder collaboration	Schools lack career expos and formal structures; little involvement from the Department and external stakeholders.
4. Parental Involvement	Parental knowledge- Socioeconomic constraints	Parents are often uninformed or uninvolved due to educational and economic barriers, especially in rural areas.
5. Perceptions of Commercial Careers	Job prospects- Misconceptions- Career attractiveness	Learners hold mixed views; some fear difficulty or lack motivation due to poor understanding of career options.
6. Subject Selection Influences	Peer influence- Teacher input- Access to career information	Choices are heavily influenced by peers and teachers; lack of access to accurate career info affects decisions.
7. Decline in Accounting Enrolment	Subject difficulty- Promotion gap- Lack of resources	Accounting is viewed as difficult and irrelevant; not promoted enough by schools or the department.
8. Economic Relevance of Commercial Subjects	National development- Skills relevance	Participants agreed commercial subjects are vital to South Africa's economy and national development.

4.4 Data Interpretation

This section interprets the qualitative data gathered through interviews with learners, PL1 educators, departmental heads, and subject advisors. The interpretations are aligned with the research questions and objectives outlined in Chapter 1 and are examined through the lens of the Constructivist Learning Theory, especially Vygotsky's and Piaget's perspectives. The interpretation also integrates themes identified during the thematic analysis. Where appropriate, limitations such as lack of triangulation or access to supporting quantitative data are acknowledged.

Theme 1: EMS Foundation and Preparation

According to the research, schools differ in how they teach the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), which are taught to learners in Grades 7–9. Concern regarding educators' lack of EMS subject specialization was voiced by many participants. "Our teacher doesn't explain business subjects adequately," for instance, said one learner. Life Orientation is another lesson she imparts to us (L004). Teachers attested to this difficulty, with EDU002 saying, "Some educators are just filling in, and they never did accounting themselves." This theme relates to Goal 1.6.2.1, which evaluates how well EMS prepares learners for Grade 10 commercial subjects. According to Vygotsky's theory that learners require guided instruction within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the absence of organized EMS instruction fails to construct cognitive scaffolds. Without varied learning resources or subject-qualified professors, learners are not assisted in building a foundation of business knowledge.

Theme 2: Understanding of Commercial Subjects

Although some learners and teachers knew that accounting, economics, and business studies are commercial subjects, their perceptions of the value and purpose of these subjects differed. "I believed accounting was reserved for people who are brilliant with mathematics," for example, L008 stated. Therefore, I didn't pick it. In constructivism theory, where learners absorb and adapt new information based on experience and teaching, this shows a lack of cognitive development and schema construction. Here,

misunderstandings brought about by a lack of conceptual clarity in commercial subjects have impacted learners' motivation and self-esteem.

Theme 3: Career Guidance and Institutional Support

The theme emphasizes structural flaws in career assistance systems, which contrasts with Theme 2, which focusses on learner comprehension. The majority of schools don't have organized career counselling sessions or have career fairs. "We used to hold job expos before COVID, but they ended, and the department has not restored them," EDU004 observed. With its emphasis on institutional exposure to commercial subjects' routes, Objective 1.6.2.2 is in line with this. When career-focused scaffolding tools like career discussions, aptitude tests, or mentoring are not offered, learners make poor decisions. The learning environment is not sufficiently rich, according to constructivist theory, to enable learners to create meaning around their chosen fields of study and careers.

Theme 4: Parental Involvement

Parental participation in career counselling and subject selection is low. According to L015: "My mother just told me that I have to pick what I prefer. She has no knowledge of these subjects. Rural socioeconomic conditions prevent parents from participating effectively because of their limited exposure to education or employment opportunities, according to a number of educators. Despite constructivism's recognition of the sociocultural context of learning, these results imply that families are frequently left out of the learning environment. Knowledge transfer between generations, which is essential for creating reasonable career expectations, is mostly lacking.

Theme 5: Perceptions of Commercial Careers

There were differing opinions about commercial careers. Some learners saw subjects like accounting as challenging or unrelated, while others recognized the importance of such careers ("I want to create my own firm, that's why I picked firm Studies" – L021). "They don't see the wider picture; they think accounting is just about numbers," observed educator EDU001. This study recognizes that views differed according to peer influence, teacher assistance, and school context to prevent overgeneralization. This theme, which

examines learner attitudes that are influenced by both internal and external factors, is in line with Objective 1.6.2.3.

Theme 6: Subject Selection Influences

The most common sources of influence on subject selections were classmates, teachers, and false information. According to L010, "I chose subjects because my friend thought accounting is hard and not good." Teachers believed that learners lacked career literacy, which should be developed gradually across the EMS phases. This illustrates unstable scaffolding from a constructivist perspective, in which learners base their decisions on peer narratives rather than organized, research-based instruction. These choices are further weakened by the absence of instruments for future planning and formative feedback.

Theme 7: Decline in Accounting Enrolment

The majority of educators and department heads attributed the drop in accounting enrolment to inadequate marketing, a lack of departmental support, and subject difficulty. "There are no campaigns that show learners how vital accounting is," DH003 stated. They just hear about science. EDU005 also highlighted the lack of diagnostic tools for early learner potential identification in commercial paths. This subject reveals the department's minimal participation in addressing declining enrolments, which is in line with Objective 1.6.2.4. Because constructivist principles promote active involvement and feedback loops, the lack of learner-centred techniques runs counter to these ideals.

Theme 8: Economic Relevance of Commercial Subjects

The fact that commercial themes support the growth of the national economy was acknowledged by all groups involved. "For the nation to prosper, we need entrepreneurs, accountants, and economists," CI001 stated. However, we aren't making enough early investments in them. This theme emphasizes how curriculum relevance is recognized but learner uptake is not supported, highlighting the policy-practice gap. South Africa was one of several emerging situations where this discrepancy was substantiated by the literature examined in Chapter 2.

Synthesis and Alignment with Theoretical Framework

All the data points directly to the constructivist basis of the research. Insufficient scaffolding, context, and social support are preventing learners from building meaningful knowledge and making wise decisions. Perceptions are influenced by fear and false information, EMS is taught inconsistently, and guidance methods are inadequate. Particularly in rural areas, the Mpumalanga Department of Education seems to be under engaged in promoting commercial topics and has not taken anything to stop enrolment declines.

The findings align with all four research objectives:

EMS preparation in Grades 7–9 is insufficient (Objective 1.6.2.1).

School-level exposure to commercial careers is limited (Objective 1.6.2.2).

Learners' perceptions are shaped by incomplete information and fear (Objective 1.6.2.3).

Departmental support in marketing and resource provision is lacking (Objective 1.6.2.4).

These disparities impair learners' ability to participate in reflective, constructivist learning, indicating the urgent need for changes to policies, training for teachers, and support networks at the school level.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a thorough examination and interpretation of the qualitative information gathered from subject advisors, department heads, teachers, and learners. The results were categorised into eight major themes that were analysed from the perspective of constructivist learning theory and directly addressed the goals of the study.

Initially, the EMS Foundation and Preparation theme brought to light that many teachers in Grades 7–9 do not possess the specific knowledge required to adequately prepare learners for commercial topics, which undermines Objective 1.6.2.1. The cursory introduction of business concepts to learners' limits their comprehension and

preparedness for choosing subjects in Grade 10 because there are few possibilities for experiential or reflective learning.

Second, learners frequently have a hazy or inaccurate understanding of the commercial stream, according to the topic of Understanding of Commercial Subjects. Their lack of the ongoing knowledge-building that constructivist learning requires influences their choice of subjects.

The subject of Career Guidance and Support Systems discovered that most schools lack reliable or efficient career exposure systems, particularly in rural parts of the province (Objective 1.6.2.2). It was discovered that structured mentoring and career expos were irregular, and that many schools lacked external stakeholder support.

The fourth subject, Parental Involvement, showed that because of socioeconomic hurdles or a lack of education, parents are generally not involved in their children's career planning. This directly affects learners' capacity to make wise judgements and supports Learner Perceptions Objective 1.6.2.3.

The theme of Perceptions of Commercial Careers revealed a range of attitudes: although some learners have a positive opinion of the disciplines, many identify commercial subjects, particularly accounting, with failure and difficulties. This suggests that the supporting learning conditions that constructivism considers essential for fostering interest and confidence are lacking.

Under Subject Selection Influences, the study found that most learners rely on peers or limited teacher input to select subjects, with little personal reflection or structured support. These further undercut the ideal of learner agency promoted by constructivist approaches.

The theme of Decline in accounting Enrolment revealed that a lack of support materials, poor foundational teaching, and fear of the subject contribute to declining numbers. These findings tie closely to Objective 1.6.2.4, as they highlight an urgent need for intervention by the Department of Education.

Finally, the theme on the Economic Relevance of Commercial Subjects affirmed that all participant groups recognised the significance of commercial subjects to personal and national development. However, this understanding has not translated into effective curriculum delivery or career preparation.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

Within the context of constructivist learning theory, this chapter examined and evaluated the qualitative data gathered from a range of participants, including subject advisors, departmental heads, educators, and learners. The primary research aim and objectives of the study served as a guide for the conversation, which was thematically organised to highlight important problems influencing Grade 10 learners in Mpumalanga Province's choice of commercial disciplines.

The empirical results show several interrelated difficulties. Learners are not being sufficiently prepared for EMS as a foundation topic due to insufficient curriculum delivery and a lack of specialised teacher training. Learners' understanding of commercial courses is still basic, and they are still not exposed to enough organised support and job coaching. Because of financial limitations, parents are rarely involved, and learners' perceptions of commercial careers are shaped by misinformation, a fear of challenges, and a lack of exposure to career opportunities.

Peer and teacher influence, together with a lack of departmental outreach, have a big impact on subject choice. It was determined that the Department of Education's inadequate promotion, lack of resources, and unfavourable perceptions were the main causes of the drop in accounting enrolment. All participant groups recognised the crucial economic significance of commercial themes in spite of these obstacles.

In line with constructivist theory, which emphasizes learner-centred environments and the co-construction of knowledge, the findings underscore the urgent need for enhanced learner support, contextual teaching, and active stakeholder involvement. The results of this chapter provide a critical evidence base for the recommendations to follow in Chapter

5, which aim to address the systemic gaps identified and support the revitalisation of commercial subject uptake in rural Mpumalanga schools.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the objectives and research questions of the study, makes inferences from the findings, offers practical guidance, identifies the shortcomings of the study, and makes recommendations for further research. In order to provide a clear response to the primary research question, this chapter aims to compile and examine the study's key findings. "*Factors contributing to grade 10 learners' choice of commercial subjects in Mpumalanga province (Nkangala district).*" Four sub questions guided the study. The preparedness of EMS teachers, how schools assist learners in learning about jobs, how learners feel about commercial subjects, and the impact of the Department of Education on the study were all examined in one way or another. The perspectives of learners, educators, departmental heads, and subject advisors are included in this chapter, which also reviews the data from Chapter 4.

In addition to providing a summary of the findings, this chapter discusses the implications of the findings for Mpumalanga Province's educational policy, school administration, and teaching. The chapter begins with a synopsis of the empirical and scholarly findings (Section 5.2), followed by research conclusions (Section 5.3), specific recommendations (Section 5.4), ideas for additional research (Section 5.5), the limitations of the study (Section 5.6), and concluding remarks (Section 5.7).

5.2 Summary of findings

This section provides a thorough summary of the main conclusions drawn from the literature review and the empirical data acquired for the research. The arrangement of the results answers the main research question as well as the sub-questions in Chapter one. The academic review's major conclusions in order to ascertain the "*factors contributing to grade 10 learners' choice of commercial subjects in Mpumalanga province Nkangala*

district”, this study reviewed relevant literature and research. Relevant to the main academic findings are discussions of the three frameworks—contextual, theoretical, and conceptual that functioned as the study's compass.

5.2.1 Key scholarly review findings

Contextual framework

The contextual framework of the study placed it into the South African educational system, emphasising the actual circumstances of Mpumalanga's schools. Schools in under-resourced communities confront persistent issues such as under-qualified teachers, a lack of career guidance systems, and inadequate subject marketing, according to researchers like Mabunda and Moloji (2020). These contextual impediments were substantiated by an assessment of national performance statistics and policy analysis (DBE, 2021). It revealed that the curriculum receives little support and that EMS is not frequently taught by fully qualified educators. Fewer learners enrol in commercial subjects as a result of this more expansive learning environment, which also undermines learners' self-confidence.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the constructivist learning theory, the study examined how learners actively construct knowledge through exposure, experiences, and interactions. Social context and assistance from those with more knowledge than you have a significant impact on how you learn, according to Vygotsky's social constructivism (Shabangu & Mhlongo, 2021). This hypothesis supported the idea that learners struggle to understand the subjects if EMS educators are not well-versed in it or are unable to demonstrate how it connects to real-world situations. For this reason, learners may choose different subjects.

The study supported the theoretical foundation of the research by demonstrating that learners are more interested in and engaged with the subjects when taught using interactive and context-rich approaches (Letsoalo & Radebe, 2022).

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework gathered several elements that influence learners' subject selection. The evaluated literature (e.g., Mahlangu & Mokoena, 2021; Dube & Sibanda, 2020) contained five key concepts:

1. **EMS Foundation Early learning experiences**, particularly in grades 7–9, have an impact on a learner's readiness for commercial subjects in grade 10.
2. **Teacher Influence:** learners' perceptions of EMS and related subjects are directly impacted by the behaviour, expertise, and teaching methods of teachers.
3. **Job Awareness:** When learners learn about several job alternatives, their interest levels significantly increase. According to schools that host expos or provide counselling services, more learners are enrolling in lessons.
4. **Parent Involvement:** In rural regions, parents frequently lack the knowledge and tools necessary to assist their children in making wise choices.
5. **Policy and System Support:** learners are less likely to consider commercial subjects as a result of departments' poor marketing and ambiguous curricular routes. Recent research has also supported these theories, such as Ramahlape (2023). They discovered that the government frequently prioritises STEM and technical education above commercial subjects. According to the study, families, schools, departments, and learners must all be involved in providing sound subject choice advice.

The literature review presented in Chapters 2 proved that a variety of interconnected reasons leading to decline in commercial subjects' enrolment. Poor EMS foundational training, a lack of structured career guidance, a lack of qualified educators, inadequate parental support, and inefficient marketing by educational leaders are a few of these. An overview of the empirical study that was founded on these discoveries is provided in the next section (5.2.2).

5.2.2 Key empirical findings

In Chapter 4, the empirical results were based on the qualitative data collected from learners, teachers, department heads, and subject advisors. This analysis was organised into themes based on the conceptual framework and the research objectives of the study. These findings provided insight into the ways that institutional policies, experiences, and perceptions influence learners' choices of subjects in the commercial stream.

5.2.2.1 Theme 1: EMS Foundation and Preparation

According to the findings, teachers of EMS in Grades 7–9 frequently lack the necessary qualifications or are under-qualified, which negatively affects the learners' fundamental understanding. Due to the limited depth of content, poor teaching, and lack of subject relevance, most learners felt that EMS does not sufficiently prepare them for Grade 10 commercial subjects. In support of Objective 1.6.2.1, this illustrates the shaky relationship between EMS training and potential commercial subject acceptance.

5.2.2.2 Theme 2: Understanding of Commercial Subjects

A limited and often imprecise awareness of the nature of commercial subjects was demonstrated by participants, particularly learners. The significance of commercial subjects to the economy was acknowledged by educators and subject advisors, but many learners were unsure of the specific subjects involved, career opportunities, and their practical implications. There is a gap in early subject awareness, which is addressed by Objective 1.6.2.3.

5.2.2.3 Theme 3: Career Guidance and Support Systems

The findings showed that there were few career support services in the schools. Most learners had never received official career guidance in commercial subjects or attended a career fair. The Department of Education's lack of support and their limited collaboration with external parties were cited by educators and department heads. This supports

objective 1.6.2.2 and shows that schools are not exposing learners to the options in the commercial stream enough.

5.2.2.4 Theme 4: Parental Involvement

The study discovered that parents had very little influence over the selection of subjects. A large number of learners came from homes where the parents were not educated or knowledgeable enough to provide career and subject-specific advice. Socioeconomic issues also contributed, since some parents gave short-term work more importance than long-term career planning, this further restricts the ability to make educated decisions.

5.2.2.5 Theme 5: Perceptions of Commercial Careers

Regarding careers in the commercial sector, learners had differing opinions. While some thought commercial issues were hazardous or challenging, others thought they offered promising professions. Insufficient exposure and a dearth of success stories made people less confident in their choice of subjects. Objective 1.6.2.3 is explicitly supported by this theme, which demonstrates how important learner perception is to subject acquisition.

5.2.2.6 Theme 6: Subject Selection Influences

The majority of learners reported that their limited knowledge, teachers, and peer groups had a significant impact on them. Frequently, perceived topic difficulty or social influence took precedence over personal interest. These results support the notion that learners are not always empowered to make their own selections and that subject selection is not always founded on informed choice.

5.2.2.7 Theme 7: Decline in Accounting Enrolment

According to data collected by study, accounting was the least popular subject in the commercial stream. Its perceived difficulty, lack of resources, and lack of support were mentioned as major reasons by both educators and learners. The Department of Education was thought to be falling short in its efforts to demystify or promote the subjects. This reinforces Objective 1.6.2.4 and emphasises how little the department can do to stop the downward trend.

5.2.2.8 Theme 8: Economic Relevance of Commercial Subjects

Notwithstanding the difficulties, every participant group acknowledged the commercial subjects' economic significance. Accounting, business studies, and economics were recognised as having a role in both youth employability and national growth. Nevertheless, neither institutional advancement nor learner enrolment have resulted from this recognition.

5.2.3 Synopsis of Empirical Results

Across all themes, the empirical results demonstrate that a combination of poor EMS foundations, little career counselling, low parental involvement, and insufficient departmental support affects learners' subject choices. These results provide a firm understanding of the intricate elements behind the fall in commercial subject enrolment in Mpumalanga and clearly address the study questions put out in Chapter 1.

5.3 Research conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of the study, structured around the four sub-research questions (Section 1.4.2). Each conclusion reflects the evidence produced and moves beyond summarizing to offer meaningful analysis. These build toward answering the overarching research question: *What are the factors that contribute to the decline in learners choosing commercial subjects in Grade 10 in Mpumalanga Province (Nkangala district)?*

The analysis is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learners construct knowledge through interactions within their social and educational environments.

5.3.1 To what extent are Economic and Management Sciences teachers in grades 7, 8 and 9 influence their learners to choose commercial subjects in grade 10? Refer to Section 1.4.2.1.

Even though EMS is meant to serve as a bridge to Grade 10 commercial subject choice, it frequently fails because teachers lack specialised training or use rote education methods, which, according to constructivist theory, leaves learners unprepared for the conceptual demands of subjects like accounting or economics. This systemic weakness erodes learners' confidence and reduces their motivation to pursue the commercial stream.

5.3.2 How do schools assist learners in grade 9 to expose them to various opportunities available when pursuing commercial subjects? Refer to Section 1.4.2.2.

Typically, schools provide little in the way of job advice, few career fairs, sporadic subject counselling, and little stakeholder engagement. learners' ability to make wise decisions is hampered by this lack of controlled experience. According to constructivism, learners retain their disengagement from the significance and advantages of commercial channels unless they engage in genuine interactions that foster comprehension.

5.3.3 What are the perceptions of learners in Mpumalanga province regarding commercial subjects? Refer to Section 1.4.2.3.

Learners' perspectives range greatly, from acknowledging the worth of commercial employment to experiencing worry and misunderstandings stemming from peer narratives or inadequate academic experiences. Making decisions is a socially built process as much as a personal one. The lack of clear communication and uplifting role models further skews perceptions and encourages people to shun business-related subjects, particularly accounting.

5.3.4 What role does the Mpumalanga Department of Education play in the declining learner interest in the commercial stream? Refer to Section 1.4.2.4.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education does not do much to promote the commercial stream; there is no career advocacy campaigns, little marketing, and little assistance for teachers. This absence suggests lost policy-lever potential to offset declining enrolment from a systemic perspective. Schools and learners lack the supportive environment required for well-informed, self-assured decision-making in the absence of institutional assistance.

5.3.5 Principal Findings of the Study

Addressing the primary study question, "What are the factors that causes the decline in learners choosing commercial subjects in grade 10? The study comes to the conclusion that systemic, institutional, and instructional flaws all contribute to this deterioration.

The Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) curriculum in Grades 7–9 does not effectively prepare learners at the instructional level because there are many teachers who are either underprepared or unqualified. The comprehension and confidence of learners in commercial subjects are restricted by this inadequate foundation.

At the institutional level, schools do not offer enough career counselling and do not have organised processes to help learners choose their careers, which prevents them from being exposed to the prospects that commercial subjects present.

Many learners have socially unfavourable or ambiguous views about commercial careers, which are shaped by peer pressure, false information, and a lack of parental participation. These issues are particularly common in rural and socioeconomically underprivileged areas.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education also seem not doing enough to actively promote the commercial stream; it does not offer resources, policy support, or subject advocacy. Collectively, these elements produce an unhelpful atmosphere where learners find it difficult to choose their subjects wisely.

Constructivist theory serves as the foundation for the findings, which confirm that learners interact with their surroundings to gain knowledge and make academic judgements. As a result, the drop in enrolment in commercial subjects is a reflection of the inefficient social, pedagogical, and policy frameworks that surround learners throughout this crucial stage of their academic careers.

5.4 Recommendations

A complex web of interrelated factors, including poor EMS preparation, a lack of career guidance, low parental involvement, misconceptions about commercial careers, and a lack of departmental support, were found to be responsible for the decline in the number of learners choosing commercial subjects in Grade 10. The recommendations listed below are put forth at various levels of the education ecosystem in light of these findings.

5.4.1 Level of Governance (Education Departments at the provincial and district levels)

First recommendation: Make sure all EMS educators are trained and prepared to the teach the subject.

To guarantee that all EMS teachers in Grades 7-9 are subject-qualified, the Mpumalanga Department of Education should develop a focused recruitment and training plan in collaboration with the district offices. It should be essential to attend ongoing workshops for professional development that emphasise learner-centred teaching, curricular depth, and practical business applications. This will improve learners' fundamental knowledge and preparedness for Grade 10 subjects' selections, directly addressing Objective 1.6.2.1.

Second recommendation: Create and execute a thorough policy to raise awareness of commercial subjects.

Promoting the value of commercial subjects particularly accounting, economics, and business studies should be the focus of a national and local campaign. Informational roadshows, online content, and printed materials given to schools should all be a part of this. A campaign like this would be in line with Objective 1.6.2.4, which deals with the Department's obligation to reverse the waning interest in commercial matters.

Third recommendation: Formalise planned career development programs for intermediate and senior learners.

It is necessary for the Mpumalanga Department of education to create a provincial framework that requires career assistance in the senior phase. This framework should include business scenario projects, commercial subject simulations, and career interest inventories. These programs ought to be created with constructivist ideas in mind, enabling learners to actively develop their knowledge of possible career paths.

5.4.2 Level of Institution (subject advisors and District Offices)

Forth recommendation: Use district subject advisors to oversee and assist with the delivery of the EMS curriculum.

More frequent deployment of EMS subject advisors to schools is necessary for district education offices to improve their monitoring and support functions. Subject advisors

should check educator credentials, determine whether EMS is being taught in accordance with CAPS, and offer resources or instructional techniques. This would guarantee that EMS is not just discussed but also effectively taught to aid in the selection of subjects.

Fifth recommendation: Arrange regular subject promotion events and career fairs.

Annual commercial subject promotion days should be planned by the districts, bringing local entrepreneurs, business executives, and accountants to give presentations to learners. These gatherings ought to focus particularly on underprivileged and rural schools, guaranteeing fair access to information. These expos would help achieve Objective 1.6.2.2, which calls on schools to actively prepare learners for careers in business.

5.4.3 At the school level (teachers, principals, SGBs)

The sixth recommendation: Is to incorporate an organised approach to subject choice into the curriculum for Grade 9.

A subject orientation program that is integrated into Life Orientation or EMS should be available at every school. Career pathway exploration, subject simulations, and group counselling sessions should all be a part of this. In order to improve learners' perceptions of commercial subjects, educators can work across departments to present a comprehensive picture of how subject choices impact future professions (Objective 1.6.2.3).

Seventh recommendation: Creating learner-led business groups and entrepreneurial organisations

The establishment of Entrepreneurship Clubs or Commercial Subject Societies should be encouraged by schools in order to foster peer participation. These groups are capable of organising business plan competitions, hosting guest speakers, and managing school businesses. Such programs would increase learners' exposure to practical applications, igniting their curiosity and dispelling myths.

Eighth recommendation: Is to Strengthen the participation of parents in subject selection procedures.

Schools should host community gatherings and information sessions to tell parents about career options, subject combinations, and the value of commercial subjects, especially in remote areas. To help get beyond obstacles related to education or literacy, simplified guidelines should be produced in the local tongues. This is consistent with research on the impact of parental participation on learners' decision-making.

5.4.4 Community Level (Private Sector, Local Companies, Municipalities, NGOs)

The ninth recommendation: Is to collaborate with industries and communities to increase exposure to commercial fields.

In order to bridge the gap between academic content and economic application, local businesses and non-profit organisations should collaborate with schools to offer Grade 9 learners site visits, mentorship, and job shadowing opportunities. These real-world experiences would assist learners in connecting theoretical concepts to real-world situations (Objective 1.6.2.2).

Tenth recommendation: Introducing community-based initiatives to overcome socioeconomic and information access gaps is the

In under-resourced and rural locations, community centres and non-governmental organisations should provide career guidance resources, after-school programs, and digital platforms where learners may access subject selection tools and career information. By assisting parents and learners, these programs would overcome the financial and geographic limitations mentioned in the study.

5.5 Avenues for further research

Although this study has shed light on the causes influencing the decrease in Grade 10 learners in Mpumalanga Province selecting commercial subjects, it has also revealed a number of topics that demand more research. Both the research's limitations and its emerging themes serve as the foundation for these recommendations.

1. Comparative research between provinces

Future studies should look into how province-specific or urban/rural environments affect the selection of commercial subjects. These kinds of studies would allow for more complex, location-specific interventions and policy suggestions.

2. Monitoring the subject choices of learners over time

In-depth information about when and why learners' interests in commercial learners' shift could be obtained by longitudinal research that follows learners from Grade 7 through Grade 12. This would make it easier to determine the crucial intervention stages.

3. Teacher training and qualifications' effects on learners' decisions

Learner motivation and preparedness for commercial subjects should be investigated further in relation to EMS learners' qualifications, instructional methodologies, and professional development. This supports objective 1.6.2.1 and may influence next teacher preparation initiatives.

4. The efficiency of employment fairs and classroom instruction

Although this study pointed out a deficiency in guiding activities, future studies should assess the efficacy of various career advice models implemented in South African schools, particularly those that incorporate community and parent involvement.

5. The influence of cultural and socioeconomic elements on parental participation

More research should examine how cultural views and family income influence parental responsibilities in subject selection, as evidenced by the low level of parental involvement observed in rural areas due to financial and educational constraints.

6. Examining learners' misunderstandings of commercial subjects

Future studies might concentrate on figuring out what misconceptions or anxieties learners have about subjects like accounting or economics. This could result in the creation of learner-centred interventions that increase enrolment by demythologising certain subjects.

5.6 Research Limitations

Even though this study is valuable and relevant, it must be realised that it has several limitations that could have affected the breadth and depth of its conclusions.

1. Geographical restrictions

Only a few schools in the province of Mpumalanga, particularly those in rural and township were included in the study. The results might not apply to South African provinces or urban schools due to this geographic restriction. Comparing learners in urban and rural regions, it is possible that the former would encounter distinct influences and have access to diverse support systems.

2. Limited representation of participants

Even though there were a number of different participant group including learners, teachers, department heads, and subject advisors the sample size for each group was somewhat modest. The findings' dependability and depth might have been enhanced with a larger, more varied participant base.

3. Constraints related to time and resources

Time and money constraints meant that the data collection process had to be finished in a limited amount of time. Consequently, longer-term, more in-depth interactions with participants (such as focus groups or follow-up interviews) were not feasible. The capacity to delve deeper into intricate problems or inconsistencies might have been impacted by this.

4. Reliance on Data self-reported

The study made extensive use of interviewees' self-reported data, therefore, whether deliberate or unintentional, bias may be present in the responses, particularly when discussing delicate subjects like learner confidence, departmental support, or teacher qualifications.

5.7 Concluding Statement

Conducting this study has been intellectually enriching and transformative. By interacting with learners, teachers, department heads, and subject advisors in different Mpumalanga schools, I have been able to obtain personal knowledge of the many variables that affect learners' choices to choose or forego commercial subjects in Grade 10.

According to this study, learners' perspectives and academic paths can be influenced by a combination of departmental involvement, career counselling, family support, and initial exposure to the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) subject.

Additionally, it demonstrated how systemic issues like inadequately trained teachers, a dearth of career fairs, low parental involvement, and poor promotion of commercial subjects can have a detrimental impact on subject choice, especially in rural regions.

The study strengthened my resolve to promote educational justice and helped me better understand the variety of issues that rural and township schools face. The significance of paying close attention to learners' voices and comprehending their goals, worries, and the socioeconomic factors influencing their decisions has become clear to me.

Significantly, this research experience affirmed the importance of qualitative research in education by offering context, voices, and stories in addition to facts. If education practice and policy are to be genuinely successful and responsive, these human factors are necessary.

I am appreciative of the chance to add to the continuing discussion about curricular relevance, subject choice, and learner empowerment in South Africa as I close off this chapter.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical clearance



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2024/03/13

Ref: **2024/03/13/64060810/25/AM**

Name: Mr P Ngoma

Student No.:64060810

Dear Mr P Ngoma

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2024/03/13 to 2027/03/13

Researcher(s): Name: Mr P Ngoma
E-mail address: 64060810@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 0676133384

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof TI Mogashoa
E-mail address: mogasti@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 076 372 5084

Title of research:

**FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNERS' CHOICE OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS IN
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE. A CASE STUDY**

Qualification: MEd Curriculum studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2024/03/13 to 2027/03/13.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2024/03/13 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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Appendix B: Approval letter from MPE head of department



education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ikhama Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200.
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo, Umnyango we Fundo

Departement van Onderwys

Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

Ngoma P
UNISA
Tel: 067 613 3384
Email: 64060810@mylife.unisa.ac.za

RE: "FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNERS CHOICE OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECT IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE- A CASE STUDY".

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The title of your research project reads: "**Factors Affecting Learners Choice of Commercial Subject in Mpumalanga Province- a Case Study**". I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department especially the beneficiaries. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the department website. You are requested to adhere to your university's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants and schools' regulations be observed. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the departments' annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5015 / 5124 Or c.maphanga@mpuedu.gov.za

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.


MRS LH MOYANE
HEAD: EDUCATION

19 / 06 / 2024
DATE



Appendix C: Interview schedule: Learners

1. How do you view Economic and management sciences and the degree to which it prepares learners to be ready for commercial subjects in grade 10?
2. What is your understanding of commercial subjects?
3. What is your school doing to assist you to better understand careers related to commercial subjects?
4. What is the role played by your parents with assistance to career planning?
5. What is your view/ perception towards commercial careers?
6. What is your great influence towards subject selection in grade 10?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix D: Interview Schedule PL1 educators

1. What is your view of EMS in preparing learners to choose commercial subjects in grade 10?
2. What is your understanding of commercial subjects and their importance to the economy?
3. Does your school do career expos to give learners better understanding of subject choices? If yes how? If not, what might be the challenge?
4. What is your influence on learners in choosing subjects in grade 10?
5. What do you think is the major contributor of to the decline in learners taking Accounting subject?
6. How can accounting subject be made the first subjects of choice to learners in grade 10?
7. what role do parents play to assist their children when choosing streams in grade 10?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix E: Interview schedule: Departmental heads

1. Are all educators allocated Economic and Management Sciences in grades 8 and 9 qualified to teach the subject? Do you think they are doing enough to prepare learners to choose commercial subjects in grade 10?
2. As the departmental head, what do you think is the major contributor to the decline in learners taking commercial subjects in grade 10?
3. Does your school or stakeholder conduct career expo's around where your school is situated?
4. Does the department of education assist in marketing the commercial subjects?
5. What system does the school use for learners to choose subjects?
6. What is your view of commercial subjects and their importance to the economy of Mpumalanga Province and South African in general?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix F: Interview schedule: Subject advisors

1. As the subject advisor, what do you think is the major contributor to the decline in learners taking commercial subjects in grade 10?
2. How does the department of education in your district collaborate with other stakeholders to assist learners with career planning?
3. Does the department of education assist in marketing the commercial subjects?
4. What challenges do you face in promoting commercial subjects?
5. What is your view of commercial subjects and their importance to the economy of Mpumalanga Province and South African in general?
6. How does the decline in accounting enrolment align with broader socio-economic trends?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix G: Assent to participants

Research title: **Factors contributing to learners' choice of Commerce subjects in Mpumalanga Province: A case study.**

Dear _____

Date _____

I am doing a study on "**Factors contributing to learners' choice of commercial subjects in Mpumalanga Province**", as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways that your teachers can use to in order for learners to better understand the importance of commercial subjects. This may help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study.

I would like to ask to interview you. Answering the questions won't be longer than 30 minutes.

I will write a report on the study, but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Participation is voluntary and you do not have to be part of this study if you don't want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time without penalty. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

There are no risks to this study.

You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent, or another adult call me at 0676133384. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Researcher: Ngoma P

Phone number: 0676133384

Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

WRITTEN ASSENT

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study, and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

Learner's name (print):

Learner's signature:

Date:

_____ Witness's

name (print)

Witness's signature

Date:

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

Parent/guardian's name (print)

Parent/guardian's signature:

Date:

Patrick Ngoma



11 Jul. 24

Researcher's name (print)

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Appendix H: Request for permission to conduct research at schools.

Enquires: Ngoma P
Contact: 067 613 3384

Email address: 64040810@mylife.unisa.ac.za

272 Taylor Street
Eloff
Delmas
2211
11 JULY 2024

Dear Sir/Madam (The Principal)

I, Ngoma Patrick, am doing research under the supervision of Prof TI Mogashoa at the University of South Africa (UNISA) towards Master of Education. The title of my research is **“Factors contributing to learners’ choice of Commercial subjects in Mpumalanga Province: A case study.”** I humbly request permission to be allowed to conduct research at your school.

The aim of the study is to collect to Investigate factors causing the decline in learners choosing commercial subjects in grade 10. Your school has been selected because it is one of the schools in Mpumalanga province where the research will be conducted and is more accessible to the researcher.

This study is important because it will assist the Mpumalanga Department of education and other stakeholders to make informed decisions when implementing policies and the assistance given to learners with regards to subject choices. This may increase the number of learners choosing of commercial subjects. Furthermore, the results would prepare learners to comprehend the significance of commercial subjects in the current state of the economy and help parents, learners, and the Department of Education better understand the factors that prevented learners from choosing commercial subjects.

The study will use interviews; the responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. Participants will be contacted in time for interviews, and they will be randomly selected to participate in this study. Participation will always remain voluntary which means that participants have a choice to withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without any penalties. This research represents no risk to participants. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participating in the research.

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Ngoma Patrick on 0676133384 or email 64040810@mylife.unisa.ac.za . The findings are accessible for 5 years. Should you require any further information or concerns about the manner in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof TI Mogashoa on 012 429 4033 or email mogasti@unisa.ac.za .

Thank you in advance.

Mr. P Ngoma

Appendix I: Letter requesting parental consent for minors

Dear Parent

Your child _____ is invited to participate in a study entitled “**Factors contributing to learners’ choice of Commerce subjects in Mpumalanga Province: A case study**”.

I am undertaking this study as part of my master’s research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to investigate factors causing the decline in learners choosing commercial subjects in grade 10 and the possible benefits of the study are the increase in learners’ taking commercial subjects in grade 10 in Mpumalanga Province.

I am asking permission to include your child in this study because he/she is doing grade 9/10/12, I expect to have 19 other children participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

- Take part in an interview, which will take place at his/her school during the time that will be allocated by the school principal, which will not affect him/her on his studies. Permission to use an audio recording for the researcher to be able to keep record of the interview.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school’s name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are to better understand commercial subjects and it’s important to the economy. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child’s participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The study will take place during regular classroom activities with the prior approval of the school and your child’s teacher. However, if you do not want your child to participate, an alternative activity will be available all school activities are done.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information

gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

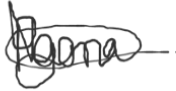
The study will use interviews; the responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. Participants will be contacted in time for interviews, and they will be randomly selected to participate in this study. Participation will always remain voluntary which means that participants have a choice to withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without any penalties. This research represents no risk to participants. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participating in the research.

If you have questions about this study, please ask me or my study supervisor, Prof TI Mogashoa, Department of curriculum and instructional studies, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is 0676133384 and my e-mail is 64060810@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The e-mail of my supervisor is mogasti@unisa.ac.za. Permission for the study has already been given by Principal and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child:

Sincerely

_____	_____	_____
Parent/guardian's name (print)	Parent/guardian's signature:	Date:
<u>Ngoma Patrick</u>		<u>11 JULY 2024</u>
Researcher's name (print)	Researcher's signature	Date:

Appendix J: Turnitin report

PAPER NAME

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AUTHOR

PATRICK NGOMA

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CHARACTER COUNT

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92 Pages

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Summary

Appendix K: language editing certificate

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CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

To whom it may concern

This document is to certify that the manuscript listed below was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and overall style by one of the qualified team members of Ompha Mukundi Trading Supply and Services.

The substantive content of the article mentioned below remains the full responsibility of the author/authors:

Best regards,

Ompha Mukundi Trading Supply and Services Language Department

EDITOR

MAGODI THABELO

Wednesday, 13 Aug 2025

Manuscript Title:

FACTORS CONTRIBUTION TO GRADE 10 LEARNERS' CHOICE OF COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE: A case study

Author/s:

NGOMA PATRICK

Student number: 64060810

