

*Original Research Article*

# The Problems Encompassed in Development of a New Curriculum: A Case of Sesotho Language

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**Abstract**

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Curriculum development is important, and necessary especially because education needs to be developed each and every time to respond to the current needs of the society. Alviore (2014,2) says “curriculum development plays a vital role in improving the economy of a country. It also provides answers or solutions to the world’s pressing conditions and problems...” Education must answer for the challenges and the problems the community/society or nations face hence the need for curriculum development. In the development of curriculum, all stakeholders should be involved: parents, teachers, the ministry involved, higher learning institutions and the students. This study is prompted by the new Sesotho curriculum of Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) in Lesotho. The problem is, in the new curriculum the most important aspects are less considered in the examinations. Teaching of Sesotho Language structure and grammar, “*sebopeho-puo*” will be affected negatively because of the weight it is given in the examinations. The researcher will collect data from teachers and students through telephonic calls and Whatsapp calls because through this devices the researcher can cover a large area within a very short time. Interviews will be done to Sesotho teachers. The researchers have found that in some schools teachers do not give *sebopeho-puo* ‘structure and grammar’ enough attention like before.

**Keywords:** Assessment, Curriculum, ECOL, NCDC, Sesotho grammar

## INTRODUCTION

Su (2012,154) perceives curriculum as a means of completing particular educational goals and objectives, and can be considered as a checklist of desired outcomes. The objectives of the curriculum must answer to the needs of a society involved. In other words if the objectives do not help in the growth of the society then it is not good. In the changing of curriculum, there are certain things to be taken care of. The aim of the curriculum is to develop the nation from the grass roots. When developing curriculum the concerned parties should be engaged to assess the problems which have

been encountered in the previous curriculum, how such problems can be overcome, what developments can be done to the new curriculum. What benefits the new curriculum brings. Will the content given in the new curriculum benefit the consumers? In each and every field there are some crucial aspects which must be handled with care. Sesotho curriculum must help students on how to read and write.

Every language has its phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Kalsum et al. (2021,9) explicates that “In linguistics, morphology is a branch of knowledge

that concern to study about word formation or morpheme of a language.” Like any other language Sesotho has its morphology and syntax and are different from other languages. Students from lower grades to high schools are taught the morphology and the syntax of Sesotho. As indicated before, most important aspects which develops the nation must be included in a curriculum, that is, Curriculum must include things that will assist students in the knowledge of their language's morphology and syntax. If curriculum includes necessary information it means the syllabus will include content that will help teachers to prepare relevant content for the students. The information from the syllabus will help in the assessment and examination of the students. Kelly (2009,151) maintains that national curriculum assessment programme should be formative, diagnostic, summative and evaluative. Formative promote effective learning by pupils and diagnostic identifies learning difficulties or problems so that appropriate remedial help and guidance can be given. If *sebopeho-puo* 'grammar' is given less weight in the examinations, this kind of assessment cannot be formative because it does not promote effective learning by students. Student lose interest in learning something which does not weigh much in the examinations. Johansson (2010,26) finds that “students thought that teacher-talking time was a good way for them to learn grammar but not making it interesting” Which means teachers can make students enjoy and love grammar if they make a point that they always do it with students. It is also not diagnostic. The weight given to the concept or topics in the syllabus should tally with the weight given to those concepts or topics in the examinations and this should be guided by the curriculum. Taking into consideration that some concepts are the bases of other topics or concepts. In the teaching of Sesotho, the grammar *sebopeho-puo* 'grammar' is the base of each and every concept. This is because *sebopeho-puo* 'grammar' teaches a student how to read and write Sesotho properly. Even if students are taught how to write good reports, articles, speech and letters if they do not know how to correctly construct the words and sentences this will not help them. The structure and grammar concepts are expected to be taught because they are included in the syllabus. Teachers are expected to teach all the concepts of Sesotho grammar *sebopeho-puo* 'grammar' as they appear in the syllabus but then they are less examined, this makes students to be less interested in learning grammar, and teachers also feel discouraged to teach it. Students are always interested in getting good marks and credits which will allow them to be admitted at tertiary. Johansson (2010) indicates that “the teacher-student relationship mattered for learning and many had grade as the major source of motivation.” If Sesotho grammar *sebopeho-puo* is given only ten percent of overall marks it means this might make students to be less interested in it. Students might find it

difficult to give grammar the same time as other aspects which give them more marks.

In the new curriculum there are new and important topics which have been added. Most of which will support students in different fields. The syllabus has structured the topics in such a way that they cover for all fields. The problem is the structure and grammar *sebopeho-puo* is given less weight in the examinations which makes it very difficult for students to be serious or to be more interested in learning it. The weight of the syllabus content and assessment do not match. This problem leads to students who do not know how to write Sesotho properly. It is through the structure and grammar that students can be able to write a proper Sesotho. The structure and grammar *sebopeho-puo* is the backbone of Sesotho. The morphology and the syntax is taught through *sebopeho-puo*. The aim of this study therefore is to find out whether the new curriculum of LGCSE: assists students to construct Sesotho words and sentences properly that is to write Sesotho properly. Find out whether teachers still teach Sesotho grammar properly even after it is given less marks in the examinations. Moreover, the study finds out whether the assessment encourages students to learn Sesotho grammar.

The study will be the eye opener to the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) on the issues which might hinder the progress of students, which might seem to be small issues but which can cause a big damage in their education. It will also help NCDC to involve teachers not only representatives in the development of a new curriculum because they are the ones who are hands on in the teaching of students. This study will also help teachers to understand that it is important to teach students to identify important aspects which will help them in their learning of grammar. This study will help teachers to understand that it is for the benefit of students and their benefit to teach Sesotho grammar even if in the assessment it is given less marks. It is also an eye opener for students that Sesotho grammar is not for the examinations only but also for their benefit and knowledge.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This is because data is collected from both teachers and students. The questions were prepared to be asked by teachers through Whatsapp and through direct calls. Document analysis was also used where the researcher went through *sebopeho-puo* 'grammar' to see how it is examined. The researcher asked for the LGCSE different question papers from Ntaote High school in order to find out on how Sesotho grammar is asked, and to verify that all parts of speech is covered in the question papers. The researcher read the

**Table 1.** Responses on the importance of Sesotho grammar

Answer	No of teachers	No .of teachers in %
The structure and grammar of Sesotho is important	47	94%
It is important to a certain extend	2	4%
It is not that important	1	2%
Total	50	100%

**Table 2.** Responses on the importance of the teaching of Sesotho grammar

Answer	No of Teachers	No. of teachers in %
Yes, it is very important because without the structure and grammar of Sesotho students will not be able to write and read properly. Students know how to construct words and sentences because of the structure and grammar of Sesotho.	43	86%
Yes, especially at lower classes because that is where they can understand it better. At upper classes they will be able to apply what they have learned	4	8%
Yes, at a certain stage, because when students are at high schools they need to learn other concepts that will help them to fit in tertiary level.	2	4%
Sesotho grammar has no importance these days.	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

question papers, tried to fill in the gaps left. The researcher also makes Whatsapp calls and messages to randomly selected five teachers in ten districts of Lesotho asking to give their opinion on how they feel about the examinations and the new curriculum of LGCSE. Whether both the curriculum and the examination encourages students to love and encourages them to write Sesotho properly. Whether the changes in the new curriculum benefits the society as it is expected. The researcher prepared the questions to be asked by the teachers, sent them the questions, and the answers collected were grouped depending on the answers received. The same answers were grouped together. The researcher also randomly asked students from different schools in Thaba-Tseka whether the LGCSE examinations encourage them to learn Sesotho and if it helps them to love it. The data collected is analyzed.

## ANALYSIS

In this section the questions which have been sent to teachers will be analysed and interpreted.

### 1. Is the structure and grammar of Sesotho important?

Table 1 shows that forty-seven out of fifty teachers which is ninety-four percent says that Sesotho structure and grammar is important, whereas two out of fifty teachers which is four percent believe that the grammar of Sesotho is important to a certain extent. One out of fifty

teachers, which is two percent, states that Sesotho grammar is not that important.

Most teachers say that Sesotho grammar is important whereas few have the feeling that it is not that important. Debata (2013,485) explains that "grammar is important when teaching concepts on subject, verb, clause, and phases, and other concepts such as translation method bilingual method and structural and approach and traditional methods." Debata (ibid) supports the idea that grammar is important, as a result it should be taught.

### 2. Is it important to teach the structure and grammar of Southern Sesotho? Why

Forty-three out of fifty teachers, which is eighty-six percent, postulates that Sesotho grammar is important because it teaches students the syntax and morphology of Sesotho. Four out of fifty teachers found Sesotho grammar important especially at lower classes because upper classes can be helped to apply the knowledge they have gained at lower classes. Two out of fifty teachers, which is four percent, say that Sesotho grammar is important at some stage because at upper classes students are only prepared for tertiary level. One teacher out of fifty which is two percent does not see the importance of Sesotho grammar. Table 2

Most teachers feel that it is important to teach Sesotho grammar at all levels whereas few teachers say it is important to teach grammar at a certain level and very few do not see the importance of Sesotho grammar. Rossiter (2021,2) strengthens that "with written language,

**Table 3.** Responses on the LGCSE examinations to teach Sesotho grammar

Answer	No. of teachers	No. of teachers in %
No, Because of the marks awarded to the structure and grammar of Sesotho we focused on other concepts than structure and grammar of Sesotho.	38	76%
No, our students need to pass examinations, the ten percent awarded for structure and grammar of Sesotho cannot make our students fail even if they get it all wrong. So that's the last thing we touch, especially because they have done grammar of Sesotho at lower grades.	10	20%
Yes, because there are questions asked on the structure and grammar of Sesotho.	2	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4.** Responses on the students' interest on the learning of the Sesotho grammar

Answer	No. of teachers	No. of teachers in %
No, most students were never interested in the structure and grammar of Sesotho. With the ten percent awarded in the examination they are even worse.	50	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 5.** Responses on the examinations of LGCSE on Sesotho parts of speech

Answer	No. of teachers	No. of teachers in %
Yes	27	54%
Yes, but the questions are not challenging	23	46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

grammar is essential,...written communication and any other form of in direct communication thus depend on correct use of grammar or syntax..." For a written language, it is necessary to teach grammar because without it, the orthography might be incorrect.

3. Does the current LGCSE examinations encourage you to teach the structure and grammar of Sesotho? Why

Thirty-eight teachers out of fifty which is seventy-six percent feel that LGCSE examination does not encourage them to teach Sesotho grammar because of the lower marks awarded to it. Ten teachers out of fifty which is twenty percent strengthen that they want their students to pass examinations as a result they concentrate more in other concepts of Sesotho which have more marks. Two teachers out of fifty agree that the examination encourages them to teach grammar because there is a section asked about it. Table 3

Most teachers find the LGCSE examination not encouraging them to teach Sesotho grammar and very few argue that it encourages them to teach Sesotho grammar because there are questions on it.

4. Based on the LGCSE examinations, are students interested in learning the structure and grammar of Sotho Sesotho?

Fifty teachers out of fifty which is hundred percent say most students are not interested in Sesotho grammar and with the marks awarded to it they become even worse. Table 4

All teachers strongly indicate that most students were not interested in learning Sesotho grammar and with the marks awarded to it in the examinations they are even worse.

5. Do the LGCSE examinations cover all parts of speech?

Twenty-seven out of fifty teachers, which is fifty-four percent, believe that the LGCSE examination covers all parts of speech whereas twenty-three teachers out of fifty agree that the examination covers all parts of speech but the questions are not challenging. Table 5

All teachers say the examination covers all parts of speech, that is to say, even if the marks awarded are less but they have to cover all the content when teaching.

**Table 6.** Responses based on the gaps left for students during examinations

Answer	No. of teachers	No. of teachers in %
Yes, if they do not know parts of speech because they are guided as to which parts of speech to be filled in, in the space left.	34	68%
No, it is not difficult because they are guided as to which parts of speech to be used.	16	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 7.** Responses on how to encourage the teaching of the grammar of Sesotho

Answer	No. of teachers	No. of teachers in %
Sesotho grammar should be awarded 60% like before in the examinations.	16	32%
At least Sesotho grammar be awarded 50 % in the examinations	24	48%
At least Sesotho grammar be awarded 40% in the examinations.	10	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 6. Is it difficult for students to fill in the gaps left? Why?

Thirty-four teachers out of fifty which is sixty-eight percent find it is easy for the students to fill in the gaps if they know parts of speech whereas sixteen teachers out of fifty which is thirty-two percent postulate that it is not difficult to fill in the gaps because they are guided and given parts of speech to be filled in. Table 6

Most teachers posit that it is difficult for students to fill in gaps if they do not know the parts of speech and few say it is not difficult because they are guided on how to fill the gaps.

#### 7. What do you think can be done to encourage the teaching of the structure and grammar of Sesotho?

Sixteen teachers out of fifty which is thirty-two percent believe that Sesotho grammar should be given sixty percent in examinations like before whereas twenty-four teachers out of fifty which is forty-eight percent thinks that at least fifty percent will encourage students to love Sesotho grammar and ten out of fifty teachers which is twenty percent say at least Sesotho grammar should be given forty percent in the examination.

All teachers say the marks awarded for Sesotho grammar should be increased. Mahboob and Rahman (2020) maintain that “the very first technique in teaching grammar that has been reiterated by most researchers is to make grammar teaching context-based.” Maybe Sesotho teachers can use techniques to teach Sesotho grammar, concentrating on form, meaning and use.

## DISCUSSION

If in the four ways proposed by Smith (2000), we are saying curriculum as process stipulates that curriculum is

the interaction of teachers, students and knowledge. And the curriculum depends on objectives. Then one would argue that if Sesotho curriculum in its objectives encourages teachers to teach all the components of Sesotho grammar but assess a little on it also discourages them to disseminate the information needed to students. Based on the information given by most teachers, most of them do not teach Sesotho grammar (*Sebopeho-puo*) as curriculum objectives require teachers to do so. Students are denied the opportunity to learn Sesotho grammar (*Sebopeho-puo*). Raselimo et al (2015) say “Lesotho government developed and published a comprehensive curriculum and assessment policy in 2009 as a strategy to minimize the negative influence of examinations on the education system by integrating curriculum with assessment.” This is a very good policy but then the assessment of Sesotho grammar (*sebopeho –puo*) is the bad influence on the examinations because its assessment does not encourage students to learn Sesotho grammar (*sebopeho-puo*) this is proven by the answers the researcher got from Sesotho teachers. Raselimo et al (2015) continue by saying the policy prescribes that formative assessment will be used and other strategies. The question is, will it be possible to identify errors, difficulties in the pupils’ work and offer advice, guidance and information to improve future performance when Sesotho grammar is not taught effectively? It will also be very difficult to guide students on how to write proper Sesotho. When designing curriculum the main purpose is to look at the end product in this case a student, and the goals and the objectives that are used to achieve that end product should build or prepare the student for life, developing abilities, attitudes, habits and appreciation. If a student does not know how to write his or her language properly, what image does he / she portrays? One needs to express himself or herself properly using his or her

own language so that it becomes easy for him or her to learn other languages, in fact it will be easy for him or her to learn other languages. Suppose a student's intention is to become a journalist, reporter, or secretary, how is he or she going to write Sesotho.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher has discovered that most teachers are not happy or satisfied about the weight that is given to the grammar of Sesotho. Teachers complained about the ten percent given to the Sesotho grammar in the examination. Most teachers say that the ten percent given to Sesotho grammar discourages students from learn Sesotho grammar. That makes students who do not know how to write Sesotho properly, the morphology and syntax of Sesotho. Even if the students are taught how to write articles, reports and speech as they are the ones that are awarded more marks, there is no use because they will not be able to write them properly.

It is also discovered that with the weight given to Sesotho grammar most teachers don't find the necessity to teach Sesotho grammar as that it's like a waste of time for their students. As a result they do not teach Sesotho grammar thoroughly.

The researcher found that the students rather spent most of their time doing other things that give them more marks.

Since teachers understand the importance of Sesotho grammar it is therefore important or essential for them to continue to teach Sesotho grammar "sebopeho-puo" as before. It is also vital to encourage students to love Sesotho grammar, show them the importance of Sesotho grammar "sebopeho-puo".

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Since the new curriculum is meant to help and equip the students with necessary information the researcher recommends that the new curriculum be visited, more especially the examinations. The Sesotho grammar should be given enough time especially because it seems like it is the core when it comes to the syntax and morphology of Sesotho.

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