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Teachers' perceptions of factors influencing mathematics learning and performance

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of factors that they feel influence mathematics learning and performance. To better understand issues impacting on mathematics, the current study explored the viewpoints of Grade 9 teachers in private schools and the impact their perceptions have on overall mathematics achievement. This qualitative research was situated within Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and focused specifically on Grade 9 mathematics teachers in private schools within the middle-class, socio-economic sector of Gauteng. The study recruited twelve participants and the instrument used was a semi-structured interview comprising of eighteen open-ended questions, to gather rich and informative information. The questions focused on factors that the participants perceive to influence mathematics learning and performance, specifically focused on the Grade 9 year. The findings revealed a set of seven themes and fourteen subthemes. The key themes identified were that teachers perceived mathematics learning and performance as interchangeable. Without learning the basic skills and concepts of mathematics, understanding becomes challenging which ultimately impacts overall performance. Furthermore, other factors that impacted on learning and performance included learner's intrinsic factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and attitudes towards mathematics. The curriculum was perceived to impact mathematics in relation to structure and time constraints. Additionally, learners background and social media were also perceived to influence mathematics learning and performance. Teachers similarly perceived factors to support them in the classroom, namely team collaboration and small class sizes. These findings suggest that teachers' perceptions have an important role to play in mathematics learning and performance and could enhance mathematical success. Teachers play a crucial role in improving learner's achievements through motivation, increased self-confidence, and engagement in the subject.

The findings of this study add to the body of research regarding factors associated with mathematics learning and performance from a teachers' perspective and may assist in identifying and understanding possible strategies and interventions to support learners in the Grade 9 mathematics classroom.

Key words
Mathematics learning, mathematics performance, teacher perceptions

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